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LETTERS

TO A

YOUNG CLERGYMAN.

BY

JOHN C. MILLER, D.D.,

CANON RESIDENTIARY OF ROCHESTER, VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF GREENWICH, EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER.

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RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

ANTHONY WILSON THOROLD, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER,

THESE LETTERS

ARE,

BY PERMISSION,

INSCRIBED, WITH GRATEFUL RESPECT,

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S FAITHFUL AND AFFECTIONATE CHAPLAIN,

JOHN C. MILLER.

THE VICARAGE,
GREENWICH PARK,
December 27, 1877.

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LETTERS TO A YOUNG CLERGYMAN.

I.

The Apportionment of the Minister's Time to the Various Duties of his Ministry.

My dear Brother,—You are now a minister of Jesus Christ. The vows of God are upon you, with a solemnity *then* only to become more solemn, when, by His grace, you shall have "used the office of a deacon well," and shall be admitted to a higher order of the ministry.

Often, I doubt not, under an almost overwhelming consciousness of the weakness of self, you have asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And your strength and comfort have been found in this: "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

In asking you to read a few letters from me, as from an elder brother in the ministry, whose lot has been cast, with the very brief exception of his first curacy, in large parishes, I do not propose to enlarge upon the dignity and responsibilities of your office. I have not undertaken to write a treatise on the ministry, but a few letters on the details of ministerial work.

In this my first letter, let me try to put myself by your side, as, on the first day of your settling down in the parish which is to be the scene of your earliest labours, you contemplate, in the silence and solitude of your study, the various departments of your work.

Whatever be the character of your parish —whether large, moderate, or small; whether agricultural, manufacturing, or commercial; whether you are called to minister to the higher, middle, or lower classes, or to all— you will naturally feel that if you are to work systematically, you must estimate *the comparative importance of the varied calls upon your time and strength*, and do your best, as

being yet inexperienced, to adjust their claims. For it is to be hoped that, while experience will teach you that you must not be the slave of system, but must yield when sudden and pressing calls to duty require elasticity, you will determine that your work must not be done in a hap-hazard fashion. Some system is essential, if only for this reason, that some of your duties will, almost certainly, be less pleasing than others; and these, without systematic recognition, will too often be neglected for the more pleasant.

First, and as of an importance which cannot be overrated, no amount of pressure of work for others must lead you to neglect your own spiritual life. Nothing can justify this. Nothing compensate for it. To nourish this is no less a duty to your people than to yourself.

Hurry, bustle, excitement, and even *rush*, are characteristics of the days in which we live. They are, to far too great an extent, characteristic of the ministry of very many. And it is but too plain that they have told—

and are telling—upon the tone of not a few of the best among us.

No words can express too earnestly my conviction, nor convey to you too urgently my counsel, that you must resolutely determine that, whatever is left undone, you must set a hedge, an impenetrable one, around your seasons of personal communion with God.

Your study must first be your oratory. You must lock and bolt and bar it.

Not only *bene orasse*, but *sæpe orasse*, will be the secret of your strength. Here must you begin and end your day by looking up. Hither must you often betake yourself, as, amid the day's work, difficulties and cares and vexations and disappointments arise. Here must you trim your lamp. Here must you mend your net. Here must you follow the Master's call, "Come apart, and rest awhile." Here, too, must your Bible be read, not as your text-book but, as your own lamp and light—rather, here must it be fed on as your spiritual food, for your own life and growth. Your ordination has

brought with it no exemption from these needs.

Further, the same counsel must be urged in reference to *study*. No pressure of parish work, however urgent, must draw you altogether from this. You will find it very, very hard to be resolute. It will seem to be your duty—I speak of the ceaseless claims of a large parish—to be out early and late. You will be tempted to think that you are never at your work when you are not on circuit in your parish, or busy in your schools, or, pen in hand, over parochial accounts or reports.

Hence it is that too often our young deacons (sometimes, it must be acknowledged, under too exacting incumbents) plunge at once into parish work, and give themselves to it, as if their books had been finally closed after their examination, or were only to be taken up to ensure not being "plucked" for priest's orders. Hence the incapacity of but too many of our clergy to deal with the great questions of the day, and to be leaders of thought. Hence con-

tempt, on the part of too many, of Christ's great ordinance of preaching.

Be sure then, in the adjustment of your time, to reserve jealously a season for reading and for study. Go deeper than the light religious literature of the day. Much of it may be good milk and water. But you must live on stronger food. You must brace your mind and your theology by breathing the atmosphere of our great divines. There have been giants in the Church, in days gone by. There are some now. And although, if you would be fully equipped for the ministry in such a day as this, you must not be a theologian only, but furnish your mind from the more varied stores of general literature, you must give your chief study to those divines who will live when the shallow—too often muddy—streams at which young clergymen idly drink now, will have passed away and been forgotten. Don't shirk *stiff* books—the very reading and digesting of which is a gymnasium for the mind. You can hardly need to be reminded that a great change has taken

place, since the beginning of the present century, in reference to the diffusion of religious knowledge. True, the religious knowledge of our people is not deep. But the extension of general education and the vast multiplication of religious books—particularly popular periodicals—bring the preacher in his pulpit, and the pastor in his intercourse, face to face with a people no longer mainly dependent upon his teaching. The secular press, too, has taken the field in religious matters, and even in theological discussion. We read "leaders" and other articles which (to speak of their power only, both of thought and language) may well make us feel that the pulpit will lose its legitimate influence—which should be great—if our preachers be drawn from an illiterate or shallow clergy.

You will not, for a moment, suppose that I am asking you to substitute secular knowledge and literature, or "enticing words of man's wisdom," for the simple preaching of that gospel which is the wisdom and the power of God. But, as has been well said,

"If God has no need of our wisdom, He has still less need of our ignorance."

In reiterating the charge of the apostle, "Give attendance to reading," we desire that the results of all reading shall be consecrated to your Master's work and glory. That every flower and every gem should be brought, as were the gifts of the Magi, as an offering to Him.

Be a *student* then, not a *reader* only. The fewer books you can buy, the fewer you have time to read, the more important that they be well chosen and well mastered.

"Not to read or study at all," says Quesnel, quoted by Bridges, "is to tempt God; to do nothing but study is to forget the ministry; to study only to glory in one's knowledge is a shameful vanity; to study in search of the means to flatter sinners, a deplorable prevarication; but to store one's mind with the knowledge proper to saints by study and by prayer, and to diffuse that knowledge in solid instructions and practical exhortations—this is to be a prudent, zealous, and laborious minister."

Carry with you throughout your ministry, however lengthened it may be, the habit of daily renewing and increasing your stores of matter. Wise and weighty are the words of one of the intellectual giants of the Irish Church—Bishop O'Brien :—

"A man who preaches much, without from time to time renewing the stock of matter with which he began his career, however sound or pious he may continue to be, will be almost sure ultimately to become a very barren preacher. And I only say *almost*, in consideration of a few rare instances, in which observation of life, and intercourse with varieties of character, seem to make an original and peculiar cast of mind, independent in a good measure of reading. But these are rare exceptions. Generally, and all but universally, a public teacher requires to have his own mind supplied and exercised by books. And to derive full advantage from them, I need hardly say, that he must not only read, but think. Undigested reading is better, I am sure, than none. I know that a different

opinion is entertained by some, but this is mine; for there is no one who does not take away some matter from what he reads, and no mind can be so inert as not to be forced to some activity, while taking in new facts or thoughts. And, what is not to be put out of view, every mind becomes more unfurnished and more inert, when reading is wholly given up."—*Bishop of Ossory's (Dr. O'Brien's) Charge at his Primary Visitation*, 1842, p. 23.

Here I close for the present, hoping to resume the subject in my second letter.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

POSTSCRIPT TO LETTER I.

IN my first letter I wrote, "Don't shirk *stiff* books."

I have been asked to name a few such books, as samples of the class intended.

I do this with great hesitation and diffidence; and, in doing it, to a very limited extent, must carefully guard myself against more than *general recommendation*, as distinguished from *entire approval.*

It would be absurd to suppose that to theological students and ministers one is to recommend no books but the books of one school, nor any but such as we think theologically sound. It is one thing to recommend a book to a young and comparatively ignorant enquirer, another to say that it is a book which a clergyman should read. We must assume that he is now able in some measure "to discern good and evil."

My younger brethren need no recommendation of the recognised treasures of theology, whether Patristic, or Anglican, or Puritan.

I am asked to name a few *modern* books which will repay the student, not only as worth reading for their subject-matter, but as affording a healthful discipline for his mental powers.

One or two are included which are neither modern nor "stiff," but which are

less likely than others to suggest themselves to the ordinary student.

Works of Edward Polhill, of Burwash, in Sussex (reprinted from the edition of 1678). *A mine of gold.* (T. Ward and Co.)

Witsius on the Economy of the Covenants.

Neander's Planting of Christianity. (Bohn's edition.)

Neander's Life of Christ. (Bohn's edition.)

Newman's Arians. (Rivingtons.)

Marcus Dods on the Incarnation. (William Allan, London.)

Wilberforce on the Incarnation. One of the ablest works of modern theology. *From a High-Church standpoint.*

Kurtz on the Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament. (Clark's Theological Library.) *This throws a flood of light on Jewish Ritual.*

Lee on Inspiration. (Rivingtons.)

W. Goode's Divine Rule of Faith and Practice. (Shaw.)

W. Goode's Nature of Christ's Presence in the Eucharist. (Hatchards.)

Vogan on the Lord's Supper. (J. H. & J. Parker.)

Pusey on Daniel. (Parker.)

East on the proper Deity of the Son of God. (Tegg.)

Francis Goode on the Better Covenant. (Hatchards.)

Hessey's Bampton Lectures. (Murray.)

Mansel's Bampton Lectures. (Murray.)

Liddon's Bampton Lectures. (Rivingtons.)

Mozley's Bampton Lectures. (Rivingtons.)

Mozley's University Sermons. (Rivingtons.)

Mozley's Primitive Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. (Murray.)

Robert Hall's Works. (Bohn.)

Elliott's Horæ Apocalypticæ. (Seeley.)

David Brown on the Second Advent. (Johnstone and Hunter.)

McCosh's Works.

Wardlaw's Christian Ethics. (Jackson and Walford.)

Bishop O'Brien on Justification.

Bishop O'Brien on Prayer. (Macmillan.)

Archer Butler's Sermons. (Macmillan.)

Henry Melvill's Sermons. (Rivingtons.)

Robertson's Sermons and his Lectures on Epistles to Corinthians. *Unsound in some very important points, but often beautiful in thought and style.*

Trench's Synonyms. (Macmillan.)

Arthur John Maclean on the Unity of God's Moral Law. (George Bell, and Macmillan.) *Very lucid and able.*

Fairbairn's Typology. (Clark, Edinburgh.)

Westcott's Gospel of the Resurrection. (Rivingtons.)

Isaac Taylor's Works.

Edward Garbett's Bible and its Critics. (Seeley and Griffiths.)

Archdeacon Hardwick's Christ and other Masters.

Trench's Hulsean Lectures.

Wace's Boyle Lectures. (Pickering.)
Waterland on the Eucharist. (Clarendon Press.)
Pratt's Scripture and Science not at Variance. (Hatchards.) *Excellent.*

The works of the Rev. Prebendary Griffith (formerly of Ram's Chapel, Homerton) are full of thought, viz.:—

The Apostles' Creed; The Spiritual Life; The Fatherhood of God (Hatchards); Fundamentals; Studies of the Divine Master (H. S. King & Co.).

A few years ago it might have been superfluous to name Leighton on St. Peter, or to advise young ministers to keep up their acquaintance with Butler's Sermons, no less than with his Analogy. It is to be feared that they are comparatively but little read now; and the neglect is to be greatly lamented.

If your means of buying books are very limited, the commentary of Dr. Jamieson, Mr. Fausset, and Dr. D. Brown will be found a treasury.

Among living expositors and commenta-

tors it is perhaps unnecessary to name the works of Bishop Ellicott and Canon Lightfoot. No minister should be without them. Archbishop Trench's "Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia" is one of his most delightful and admirable publications, affording help that reaches beyond the particular Epistles on which he directly comments. Perowne on the Psalms, and Spurgeon's "Treasury of David," are first-class works.

Haldane on the Romans must be recognised even by those who may differ from his theology as a masterly book.

The commentaries of Dr. Hodge, of America, on the Epistle to the Romans, and on 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Ephesians, cannot be too widely known to ministers.

The Rev. W. G. Humphry has published a very scholarly and useful little volume on the Acts of the Apostles.

II.

The Apportionment of the Minister's Time to the Various Duties of his Ministry.

My dear Brother,—I take up again the subject of my first letter. I propose to deal, in successive letters, with each department of duty. At present, I confine myself to the general subject of the relative and comparative importance of the several and (in a very large parish) apparently conflicting claims upon your time and strength.

You have been ordained in a branch of Christ's Church which works, for the most part, by the parochial system. True, in our cities and large towns the congregational element has become, and is increasingly becoming, prominent, not to say predominant. But, however the parochial system may have broken down, in past years, from

the inadequate working of it, and however many parishes may yet urgently need subdivision, I trust that the day is far distant when it shall cease to be the basis of our Church work. Let us aim rather at carrying it out in its perfection.

Your commission is, primarily, for a parish with its legal territorial boundaries.

You are not simply a preacher—indeed, as a deacon, you are a preacher only by the special license of the bishop for this function. You are a PASTOR. Your ministry involves the constant shepherding of the flock—visitation of the healthy, the sick, and the afflicted, whether the well-to-do or the poor—and, almost always, the Christian instruction of the young. You are at once a witness, a herald, an ambassador, an under-shepherd, a watchman, a steward, a builder and a husbandman.

In a manageable parish there will be comparatively little difficulty in systematically apportioning your time to the duties which are involved in these various aspects and bearings of your ministry.

It is in our large town parishes, in which the population is numbered by thousands—a large proportion of whom, perhaps, are of the wage-earning classes and of the poor—that the clergyman feels the pressure of the difficulty with which I am dealing. Here are masses of people, haply in a state of *nothingarianism* and home-heathenism, to be visited, with much of poverty and sickness among them. All your time and strength may be expended on them, yet not suffice. Is every other duty to be neglected? Are you to be a house-to-house visitor only?

One thing I would impress upon you. Whether your parish be large or small, manageable or comparatively unmanageable, give a place in your apportionment of your time to *every* branch of your duty. It is very improbable that every branch will be equally pleasant. You have a gift or a turn for one, but not for another. You are ready to give all your time to the elaboration of sermons, but you have no liking for sick rooms, courts or cottages, garrets or cellars. You are fond of children and of

teaching, and would willingly spend your mornings or afternoons in your school-rooms. You are of a social turn, and would readily degenerate into a mere morning caller and a lounger in drawing-rooms; or you have great faith in secular or semi-secular means for the social elevation of your people—clubs, penny readings, concerts, etc. One has known clergymen who have seemed to degenerate into mere school-managers or school-masters; and clergymen who have seemed to look for spiritual influence over the working classes and the poor by social agencies rather than by the influence of that gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation," and to which every secular or semi-secular means is to be subordinate.

Be jealous of your own special leanings. Be sure that they do not unduly warp you in the making of your plans. As I warned you in my first letter, you will be in danger of neglecting, if not wholly omitting, that which is distasteful.

Here then is room for faithfulness, for self-discipline, for self-denial, for self-mastery.

You may, by reason of the special character of the gifts which God has given you, be much stronger in one point than in another. You may have your *forte*. But you must pray and labour in the direction of your weaknesses and defects, so that you be absolutely wanting in none of the qualifications which your ministry demands. And, in your self-searching at the close of every day and every week, ask of your conscience, as before the heart-searching Master, whether you have honestly, and to the best of your judgment, proportioned your time to your varied work. Have you hung too long over your sermon? or have you slurred it? Will conscience reproach you that the visit due to such and such a sick one—sick, perhaps, unto death—has been put off, or one visit made instead of two or three, because the case is not an interesting one, or the room is squalid, or the air foul, or the physical incidents of the case painful and repulsive? Has the time been given to a pleasant call, unworthy even of the name of a pastor's visit, which

should have been given to this dying one, whose ceaseless cough, or failing intellect, or deafened hearing, or overwhelming weakness, may render the postponed visit useless, even if you be not met with the announcement, "He is gone"?

It is possible, no doubt, to be a slave to rule and system. I am not urging that you should buckle yourself into a strait-waistcoat. There must be elasticity in your rules. You must accommodate yourself to circumstances. There will be calls to duty which must be obeyed at once. But it is urged that a desultory, hap-hazard, *planless* way of working, without any mapping out of your time, and without any attempt to adjust your work in proportion to the relative and comparative importance of your varied duties, will keep you and your work in a state of hurry, worry, and confusion. If, therefore, you are naturally disorderly, let not your natural failing be your excuse. Still less, as we are sometimes tempted to do, fall back upon the notion that disorder is a sign of genius—that great minds are

not to be fettered by rules. Discipline yourself vigorously out of disorder into order. Order not only saves time; you will do more work, and do it better, and do it more happily, and do it with less worry.

I turn to the New Testament. And in the New Testament, first to the example of St. Paul, as I proceed to select for the foremost place the foremost work of your ministry. It seems to me to admit of no doubt, as I ventured to urge in the first lecture before the Church Homiletical Society, and which is printed at the end of this volume, that, when St. Paul sets forth that in which he deemed that the highest function of his ministry consisted, he fastens on this—the proclamation of the gospel of the grace of God (Eph. iii. 8).

"The pulpit," says George Herbert, "is his" (the parson's) "joy and throne."

Looking at preaching from the human side, to some extent, it has been urged, and urged truly, by one of the greatest of living orators (I am not quoting his words, but his thoughts), that no man has such an oppor-

tunity for influencing the minds and lives of others, as the man who stands up, week by week, with the peculiar and vast advantages of a preacher in a Christian pulpit. He addresses a congregation—frequently of hundreds—sometimes of thousands—who come prepared, for the most part, to listen respectfully and attentively—often with the deepest interest of which a human mind and heart are capable. From the nature of your position, they must listen without opportunity of immediate and direct reply. And you know—for I would fain suppose this—that your theme is the most awful which can occupy their attention. You believe, or you are indeed powerless, that this gospel, summed up in "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," is God's plan and message for the recovery of man for both worlds; and that it is a distinct office of God the Holy Ghost to own and to accompany this message of salvation with divine power. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Can such opportunities be surpassed?

Shall such a work as this be subordinate to aught beside? Shall sermons be carelessly put together? scrambled together on Saturdays, without study, meditation, toil, and prayer? For the light of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of God's grace and power, are not promised to you in any such sense as to exempt you from diligent preparation. It was not to the ordinary preacher, but to disciples in prospect of very special circumstances, that the promise was given, which forbade premeditation, and assured them that "it should be given them in the same hour what they should speak."

There can hardly be any hesitation as to the next claim on the apportionment of your time. I put aside for the present all reference to your ordinary duties in church, whether in public worship or in what we call "surplice duty," because in these (of which I shall hope to speak in a future letter) you have no option. So that we put next VISITATION, in all its branches.

1. Visitation of the sick; 2. Visitation of the afflicted; 3. Visitation from house to

house; 4. Social visiting. Let me remind you that all these, as well as your preaching, will be taken up in detail in subsequent letters. We are now adjusting various duties. As a parochial minister, never be content with being merely a preacher. This word "merely" is used in no disparagement of preaching. But our commission from our Master and from our Church is wider and manifold. And as to practical results, while I do not venture to say that the most diligent and loving visitation will do away with the necessity of, at least, tolerable preaching; of this I am quite sure, that average preaching, with diligent and loving visitation, will tell in time upon most parishes, more effectually than mere preaching, however eloquent or popular. It will tell more effectively for the true, deep, lasting work of the minister. And it is in this that those who are placed over our largest parishes, with their populations of ten, fifteen, or twenty thousand, feel their grievous disadvantage.

Such parishes generally bring to those

who are at the head of them much extraneous work, both in and out of their parishes, and thus personal visitation and knowledge become simply impossible to any one man. The visitation must be divided among the incumbent and his fellow-helpers.

You need hardly be reminded that in visitation the sick and the afflicted must have precedence.

Add to your visitation your SCHOOLS, and you have the three chief departments of duty between which you must allot your time: conflicting duties sometimes, in their claims; but not conflicting in their bearings upon your great work, regarded as a whole. They have a combined influence: each strengthens the other in many ways.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

III.

The Work of the Ministry.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—"Dissatisfaction," writes Richard Cecil, "accompanies me in the study and in the pulpit. I never made a sermon with which I felt satisfied; I never preached a sermon with which I felt satisfied. I have always present to my mind such a conception of what MIGHT be done, and I sometimes hear the thing so done, that what I do falls very far beneath what it seems to me should be. Some sermons which I have heard have made me sick of my own for a month afterwards." *

Yet Cecil was a "master in Israel." As such, he had a just estimate of the power of the pulpit. His standard of a good sermon was high.

* "Remains of the Rev. Richard Cecil, M.A." New edit., 1876, p. 210. Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row, E.C. Price 5s.

For ourselves, practically, our standard should be to give God and our people our best, our very best, according to the gifts and opportunities given to us; the best we can produce after prayer and pains.

Having inquired into the apportionment of the minister's time to the various duties of his ministry, and assigned the first place to the preaching of the Gospel, I now proceed to offer hints and counsels on this department of your ministerial duty.

I. PULPIT WORK. II. PULPIT PREPARATION.

I. PULPIT WORK. Why am I going into the pulpit? Why should the sermon be added to the worship of prayer, praise, and holy communion? The Word of God has been read: what would be lost, were there no sermon?

You are not going into the pulpit to read or say something *before* the people; * nor to deliver a rhetorical oration; nor to utter,

* See Trophy-Room Lectures on Preaching, No. IV., in *Clergyman's Magazine* for December, 1876, p. 337.

from book or memory, a succession of true but pointless platitudes; nor to give a lecture on morals. You are going—

1. *To deliver a message from God.*

To do this you must speak—and speak directly and earnestly and faithfully—TO the people. Earnestness does not mean rant, nor even loudness. It does not mean scolding. There may be the reality and the manifestation of deep, loving, anxious earnestness, where there are the tones and gestures of a calm, grave, and penetrating solemnity. I am persuaded that the lack of this earnestness is the fatal defect of very much of our preaching. One has listened to many a fair sermon, bearing on it the marks of care and study. It has had good matter in it, has been well arranged—sensibly put; but it has lacked directness. From first to last, the preacher has been speaking *before* us, not *to* us. Forgive me for reiterating Mr. Simeon's distinction. Few elements in preaching seem to me to be more important. You must not give me the idea of a man who has, in the discharge of a duty,

put together, with thought and care, something which sensible people may listen to, for half an hour or so, without any great strain on their attention. You must show me that you feel you have a commission and a message, and that you are burning to deliver that message, as that which has an urgent and a paramount claim on my immediate attention. You must *thaw* before you come into the pulpit. It is no place for icicles. You must speak earnestly to my conscience, to my hopes, my fears—the deep yearnings of my heart, so vague and mysterious even to myself. You must talk to me of my soul, of eternal judgment, of heaven, of hell. You must tell me of God my Father, in all the love and pity of His Fatherhood; of Jesus my Saviour, in all the adaptation and sufficiency and freedom of His salvation. You must remember that I am a sinner, a sufferer, a sorrower, a dying man. I am fighting life's battle, and it is a hard one.

God's providence is often dark. From the varied and inexhaustible pharmacopœia

of God's Word, you must give me the medicines, the anodynes, the cordials, the stimulants, which I need.

Alas! how many sermons are preached every Sunday which rise, perhaps, to a decent mediocrity of ability, but are so delivered as to leave the impression that the preacher is not at all concerned whether a single soul be the better for it all. His heart seems utterly unpenetrated by St. Paul's words, "Thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." "Why," said Sydney Smith, "call in the aid of paralysis to piety? Why this holoplexia on sacred occasions alone? Is sin to be taken from men, as Eve was from Adam, by casting them into a deep slumber? And from what possible perverseness of common sense are we all to look like field preachers in Nova Zembla, holy lumps of ice, numbed into quiescence and stagnation and mumbling?"

Nor must it be forgotten that, as God's messenger, you have a message, not only for the mere formalist, the unconverted, the worldling, and those (a large number, alas!

of our church-goers) who are hardening under the sound of the Gospel, but, also, for Christ's faithful soldiers and servants, for God's "dear children."

No doubt, one of the most embarrassing difficulties of the Christian preacher in such a day and such a country as ours lies in the promiscuous character of our Sunday congregations.

To send *none* away without a "word in season" is very difficult—often, perhaps, impossible; so varied, in many respects, are the classes and the cases before us. But, while I fully believe that, in our Sunday sermons, the awakening element should be far more prominent and powerful than it is in the sermons of very many, we have also to warn, to counsel, to build up. Nor must the "Barnabas" element be wanting—"a son of consolation." Remember, you have before you those (perhaps many) who are sorrow-stricken, perplexed, sorely tempted. Others (perhaps not a few) who can eat and digest strong meat. They must be led on to perfection. They are hungering for good

things. You must not always send them empty away. It is a high function of the ministry to comfort them that mourn, to perfect the saints, to build up believers on their "most holy faith."

Does your message reach to all this? Is it thus many-sided? Does the Gospel need no supplement for all these varied ends? One rule will carry you through. Christ fully preached suffices. Mark—"FULLY." Not partially; not in one part of His work, in forgetfulness of another. All our Father's love in Him, all the Spirit's offices and work in Him, and all His own offices and work. Your message centres in Christ—Christ is your message. Let it be the dominating, the all-pervading, idea of every sermon, to bring out *some* point of the revelation of God's truth and love, His grace and glory in Christ Jesus. Never preach a Christless sermon. Bring Christ with you into the pulpit, or do not enter it. Without Christ you have no message.

But your PULPIT WORK includes another—the most important duty. You go into the

pulpit, not only to *deliver a message from God*, but—

2. *To expound the Word of God.*

Never let this duty fall into a secondary place. Still less let it be altogether neglected. It is not necessary for this end that we should always preach directly and exclusively an expository sermon. But it is a great thing gained, if, as the result of a sermon, one obscure text of Scripture be cleared up. This may be done in passing, and sometimes parenthetically, when a difficult text is quoted in confirmation or illustration of your subject. But courses of expository sermons, if not too long continued, nor carried out too much in a spin-text fashion, are much valued. The ignorance of many of our regular church-goers upon points of doctrine is, it is to be feared, very lamentable. Many well-taught Sunday-school children would beat our gentlemen and ladies hollow, in a competitive examination or public catechizing. We are very, very far from having a people "mighty in the Scriptures."

If your choice falls upon one of St. Paul's argumentative Epistles, remember that one main object—indeed the first—should be to set out clearly his train of thought. No easy task at all times, even for a well-read and well-equipped theologian. For example: in the Epistle to the Romans, distinguish between the full treatment of a text in a topical manner, and the exposition of it and its context. Show the links of the logic. Follow St. Paul's rapid transitions. Disentangle his parentheses. Do not preach a sermon on "Justification" every time that the word occurs. Explain it and the term "Righteousness," as fully as may be, at starting. Refresh the memories of your hearers with the explanation now and then, as you go on. But, in such a case, let continuous exposition be the leading idea and endeavour.

Cecil remarks on the difference between the later and earlier styles of preaching—the preaching in the primitive Church, the preaching of the Puritans, and that of our own day—"They brought forward Scrip-

ture; we bring forward our own statements. They directed all their observations to throw light on Scripture; we quote Scripture to throw light on our observations." *

A preacher may never be more sure of the help and blessing of God the Holy Ghost than when he is studying and striving to spread the accurate knowledge of the Word of God.

I have said that there is, even among our church-goers, a lamentable lack of Bible knowledge. As preachers, we take too much for granted. We assume far too much knowledge. It is safe to assume much ignorance, and (not avowedly and offensively, but practically) to act upon the assumption.

Whether your lot, as a young minister, be cast in a town or in a country parish, you will probably have as one of your earliest duties a SCHOOLROOM or COTTAGE LECTURE. Seek with all painstaking to make this useful to yourself, as well as to

* "Remains," p. 180.

your humble hearers. You will thus gain confidence and ease in extempore speaking. But more than this. Take thorough pains with your subject. Although you have but a few poor folk—many of them old women, or a score or two of rustics—study your subject thoroughly; get it up to the very best of your ability. First, as your present duty. Each and every one in your scanty and humble gathering has a soul to be saved or lost. You have come with God's Word, as God's minister. Be faithful in little. Your Master, all worn and wearied, took pains with one woman at Jacob's well. We know what followed His pains.

Further, you are laying up stores for greater opportunities and greater work. It is gain to you to have mastered, so far as may be, a parable or miracle, or some incident in Bible history. You will be ready to preach from it readily and ripely from your pulpit.

Many a man who has become, in after years, not only a ready speaker but, a

skilful expositor of the Word of God and an able preacher, has looked back upon the schoolroom or cottage, with its humble benches, scant ventilation, and glimmering tallow candles, not only with happy memories of usefulness but, as an important means to himself personally of gaining experience and acquiring the ease which he now feels in his pulpit work.

Never yield to the temptation. "It's only a schoolroom lecture"—"Only a cottage lecture"—"I shall have no one there but a few old women and children." For your own sake, not less than for their sake, and for the Master's sake, do your best. Never think yourself too great a man to take pains with what seems little work, if it be *your* work and *God's* work.

In connection with the exposition of God's Word, as the most important element in your PULPIT WORK, we must not omit *Variety*.

Week after week—it may be for years—you will be called on to address the same people on the same great subjects, with

the same great aims. And, not seldom, more than once or twice in the week. There are some of us who have to deliver to the same people, or to congregations in which the majority is composed of the same individuals, three or four sermons every week—sometimes with aching heads, sometimes with aching hearts. And we want sameness with variety. We must give that which is old, but give it with freshness. It should be old, but not stale.

To this end we must avail ourselves of the rich *Variety* of the Scriptures. The variety of forms, I mean, under which God's truth—the subject matter of our pulpit work—is revealed. History, biography, types, spiritual songs, promises, prophecy, proverbs, parables, miracles, discourses, letters, doings, sufferings. The field is wide, the garden diversified, the treasury inexhaustible. Without tying yourself slavishly to a Medo-Persian rule, it may be well to preach, if not in regular alternation, yet with some approach to system, from each and all of the above

departments of Holy Scripture in succession. Now from its histories; now from a biography or the briefer story of an individual. This week take your text from a parable. Next week from a miracle. Let this sermon elucidate and apply a type. Let it be followed by the cordial of an exceeding great and precious promise. The words of the Great Teacher, as recorded by the Evangelists, must be frequent topics. But St. Paul and his fellow-apostles must help to complete your pulpit teaching. The Gospel may be preached from the story of Naaman, no less than from the story of the cross. Abel's altar and the scapegoat ritual teach the atonement, no less than the fifty-third of Isaiah and the narratives of Calvary. You will find suggestive illustrations of pardon, justification, and sanctification in Zechariah's vision of Joshua and Satan. Of the Psalms, writes Hooker, "The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books the Psalms do more briefly contain and more movingly express. What is there necessary for men

to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect among others." *

While then we cannot deny that, under very frequent calls to PULPIT WORK, amid the pressure of other duties in a large parish —especially if physical strength be not great, and the opportunities of rest few and far between—you will sometimes sorrow to feel that pulpit preparation comes to you too much as a task, the variety of Scripture—not to speak of the other and ever-accumulating stores of a man who keeps up his reading—will be found to be a great help both to yourself and to your people. The land from Dan to Beersheba will seldom seem all barren to a diligent student, if he be also a man of prayer. As has been well said, "If milk and honey" are "flowing" upon the surface, so too "out of" its "hills" we may "dig brass."

* Eccles. Polity, book v., ch. xxxvii., sec. 2.

In my next letter I hope to pass from PULPIT WORK to PULPIT PREPARATION.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

IV.

Pulpit Preparation.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—We pass on to PULPIT PREPARATION.

Begin on your knees. Let every sermon be planned, thought out, finished, preached, followed up, in prayer. Seek wisdom and strength from God for that which is peculiarly God's work. Remember that your Master is the living and exalted Head of the Church; that the Holy Ghost, your wisdom and strength, is given through and by Him. You are a witness to Christ. "He shall testify of me," is a chief function of "the Spirit of truth." Your aim is to glorify Christ. "He shall glorify me," is your Lord's own declaration of the Spirit's work. Let no gifts, no study, induce self-confidence or neglect of this

Divine Helper. Seek first that your own heart may be tuned and toned by Him, that your sermon may not be a task or a merely professional duty to be got through. If not on holy ground, you are at holy work. You are about to handle God's Word, to set forth God's truth. Your own spirit needs to be elevated and hallowed. You will never preach a sermon for which you will not have to give account. Let every sermon be prepared under the earnest desire and prayer that it may be a means of blessing to many souls; and the preparation and preaching of it a blessing to your own. And, as years roll on, strive to keep up this solemnity of feeling in all its freshness and power. For there is great danger lest, as you get habituated to sermon-writing, and acquire facility by practice, it should become a matter of routine duty, and you should cease to feel the responsibility and privilege of your work. And this danger can only be met by prayer and by "the communion of the Holy Ghost."

But I would fain hope that I need not

enlarge upon this point, and will proceed at once with such counsels and hints as an elder brother may, in all humility, offer.

First, as to the *choice of Subjects and Texts.*

As a young preacher, at any rate, *be not ambitious.* Wait a while before you choose difficult subjects or texts. Neither affect eccentricity by the choice of fanciful or odd texts. Be simple. To say nothing of other reasons, you will have to preach to a congregation the great majority of whom are older than yourself; some of them, let us hope, advanced and ripe believers. The great and leading truths of the Bible will always be acceptable. But they will not think you clever, but conceited, if, as a young beginner, you attempt very difficult texts, or plunge into the deepest waters. Leave these to your elders, or reserve them to your own riper years. To instance what I mean, let a few years pass over your head before you take up Genesis and geology, election and predestination, and unfulfilled prophecy. If ever you dogmatize as a præterist or futurist, as a pre-millenarian or

a post-millenarian (dogmatize I hope you never will), let it not be, at any rate, as a young deacon, nor during the earlier years of your ministry. If for no other reason, you will have little weight, and many will set you down as conceited, pretentious, and presumptuous. Dædalus, says the Grecian myth, flew safely over the Ægean Sea, on his wings of wax. Young Icarus went too near the sun, melted his wings, and was drowned. Young Phaethon found the sun's horses too much for him, and nearly set the earth ablaze.

You will find it a great advantage to yourself, as it will be a great advantage to your people, to avail yourself of your position as a minister of a Church which provides fixed tables of Psalms and Lessons, and which does not give the Word of God to her congregations desultorily and without system. These will be fresh in your people's minds. They will have heard your context but an hour before you are in your pulpit. You thus start at a great advantage. And often there will have been some

point in the Scriptures read to them on which they will have been desiring explanation.

But, as you need not tie yourself to this plan, keep a note-book for texts as they strike you, in your reading.

To repeat advice given before, as a rule the text should be chosen early; the sermon written, not too late for revision—but late—and, if possible, without any considerable intervals in the composition. I am not now speaking of deep and learned sermons for a university pulpit or special occasions, but of ordinary parish sermons. Forgive me for repeating the wise counsels of Archdeacon Evans,* quoted in my lecture before the Homiletical Society—"Strike it off at a heat." Dean Burgon† writes, "It is a great help to writing effectively, that, as soon as a man has made up his mind how he will treat a subject, he should write fast and fervently; from his heart rather than his head. I mean that it is well to write off

* "Bishopric of Souls."

† "Burgon on the Pastoral Office," ch. v., p. 188.

a sermon at one, or at most two sittings. Let a man beware of freezing over repeated acts of composition. While he is curiously casting about for a better phrase, he is forgetting the precise thing which he wished to express. While he is pondering, another and yet another view of the subject unfolds itself, or some irrelevant thought intrudes, and leads the pen astray. In the end he grows confused and paralyzed, and his sermon proves a failure. At best it can only become an accurate, perhaps a highly intellectual, composition; but without ease, or fire, or freshness. The writer would gladly exchange it, when he gets into the pulpit, for the least pretentious sermon he ever dashed off with a moistened eye and a beating heart."

Your text chosen, and *the original carefully studied*, think it well out before you turn to books. Do not write upon crutches. Let the works of other sermon-writers and of commentators be used rather to correct, amplify, and illustrate your own thoughts—not to save you the trouble of thinking.

The affluency of help now within reach, unless your library be very scanty indeed, may be abused to the stunting of your own powers.

By this advice I do not mean for a moment, or in the slightest measure, to undervalue the Church's storehouse. A well-chosen theological library, although small, is as a treasury and an armoury with which God has furnished us, by giving gifts to our great thinkers and eminent theologians. I mean only, Think and study for yourself. God's help and man's help do not exempt you from self-help.

Your text once chosen, picture as vividly as you can, in your mind's eye, your congregation—old and young, rich and poor, educated and unlearned. Write as not writing an abstract essay, but as one who has to talk naturally and earnestly to living men and women. Nor must you ask yourself, of your ordinary sermons, Would this look well in print? It has been acknowledged by masters of oratory, that what *reads well* is seldom half as effective when

spoken; you must be content to find that what is *effective when spoken will not read so well in print*, as a literary composition.

In confirmation of this, a sermon in delivery admits of greater diffuseness and repetition than it does in print. You will not suppose that I am recommending the diffuseness and repetition which arise from carelessness or poverty of thought. But we are too apt to suppose that our hearers take in an argument or a thought at once. The expansion which is recommended is not such as will weary your hearers, but such as will help them, by driving the argument or thought more closely home. For, to apply the words of Aristotle, your hearers are, for the most part, those οἳ οὐ δύνανται διὰ πολλῶν συνορᾶν, οὐδε λογίζεσθαι πόῤῥωθεν (*Rhetoric*, i. 2). A venerable and very able dignitary of our Church—one of the thinkers of our day—told me that, in a conversation which he once had with William Wilberforce on preaching, that great master of persuasive eloquence said to him, "You preachers do not repeat yourselves enough." On this

point let me quote a passage from a valuable little volume, "Papers on Preaching and Public Speaking, by a Wykehamist":—

"What would look like repetition upon paper does not sound like repetition when spoken; and repetition, with slight variations, is necessary for the full understanding of many things. To the preacher from notes, we may say what Dr. Johnson said to Boswell, when he handed him notes for a speech to an election committee in the House of Commons: 'This, sir, you must enlarge on; you must not argue these as if you were arguing to the schools. You must say the same thing over and over again in different words. If you say it but once, they miss it in a moment of inattention.' Fox advised Sir Samuel Romilly, when about to sum up the evidence in Lord Melville's trial, 'not to be afraid of repeating observations which were material.' Pitt urged a similar defence for that amplification which was thought a defect in his style. 'Every person,' he said, 'who addressed a

public assembly, and was anxious to make an impression on particular points, must either be copious upon some points, or else repeat them; and copiousness is to be preferred to repetition.' Lord Brougham gives his testimony on the same side: 'The orator often feels that he could add strength to his composition by *compression*, but his hearers would then be unable to keep pace with him, and he is compelled to sacrifice *conciseness* to *clearness*. The expansion, which is a merit at the moment of *delivery*, is turned into a defect when a speech is *printed*. What before was impressive seems now to be verbose, and the effect is diminished in much the same proportion as originally it was increased. It was for some such reason that Fox asserted that if a speech read well it was a bad speech. No Athenian audience could have followed Demosthenes in the condensed form in which his speeches are printed.'—*Quarterly Review*, No. 206. Fuller reminds us that, to the *uneducated* listener, the intellectual food should not be presented in too *solid* a

form, saying, in his quaint way, 'Without a fair proportion of chaff, a horse is apt to bolt his oats.'" *

The expansion and repetition here intended are a very different thing from that which is described by Bassanio, in Shakspeare's "Merchant of Venice"—"Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them; and when you have found them, they are not worth the search" (Act i., scene 1). It is to be feared that there are pulpit Gratianos among our preachers, of whose sermons it may be said, as Rowland Hill said of some men's speeches, they have "a river of words with only a spoonful of thoughts."

I have said that, at your study table, you must, in imagination, set your congregation vividly before you. You will very soon have gained some idea of their intellectual power and culture (or lack of both) by pastoral

* Pp. 44, 45.

visitation and intercourse. An excellent village clergyman, a mathematical first-class man, and now a learned Professor of Divinity, whom I know well, was purposing to preach about the brasen serpent. He had the sense and forethought, not always possessed by fellows of colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, to try beforehand the soil upon which, on the following Sunday, he was going to sow his seed, and he found that his villagers would not understand him if he preached about a *serpent*. A *snake* was intelligible. And about the brasen *snake* he preached.

And if it be your early lot to preach to such, you have a work calling for your best powers. It is a problem which puzzles senior wranglers and first-class men. They have grappled with the differential calculus, with dynamics and hydrostatics, with Plato and Aristotle, with tough or corrupt passages in Æschylus and Pindar, but find a new and a harder task in preaching to farm servants, field labourers, and ploughboys.

Whatever be the character of your con-

gregation, preach to them as having *hearts* as well as *heads.*

I say this because there is a class of men, both preachers and hearers, of the cold-blooded order, who either feel or affect a supercilious contempt for all appeals to the emotions. Mere sensational rant and gush are of course to be eschewed. But there is more *heart-power* than *brain-power* for you to work on in your congregation. There are hidden and deep well-springs of feeling in every man, woman, and child. God, in the Bible, appeals often and largely to the emotional part of our nature. He addresses, not our intellect only, nor our conscience only, but, our hearts. It may be said that it is an easy achievement for the preacher to draw forth women's tears. I am not urging that you should become a mere pocket-handkerchief preacher, nor that you should plume yourself complacently on being a master of eloquence because you can make men or women cry. But pathos has its legitimate and important place in pulpit oratory. The advocate who is addressing

a jury must begin with his facts and his law; but he will be but a poor pleader, if he does not avail himself of the fact that those twelve men in the jury box have hearts. I say nothing of the candidate seeking the suffrages of a constituency, because electioneering speeches have more or less of clap-trap in them. But we may take the case of the statesman in Parliament, when speaking on some burning question. He will not fail, if it be a question which at all admits of it, to remember that he must not only convince the understanding, but move the feelings of the House. "Depend upon it," said Mr. Gladstone, in his late address to the boys at Marlborough College, "it would be a great deal better for us who are men if we were not so much ashamed of emotion as we generally are. A very small proportion of the errors committed in the world, a very small proportion of the errors in public life, are due to the mere excess of emotion. It is to other more dangerous enemies than these that we owe the mischief with which the world abounds."

Let preachers remember and act on Mr. Gladstone's words. We don't want *crying men.* But we want men who *can cry*—and there are few who cannot. Warm up then in the pulpit. Try to warm up others. Put heart as well as brains into your sermon. You are not working out a mathematical problem, nor weighing the force of a Greek particle or tense, but speaking to dying men about the loss or salvation of their souls. Whitfield and Wesley would never have riveted and awakened slumbering masses, if they had preached to the intellect only. The Rev. J. Angell James, in his admirable work on "An Earnest Ministry the Want of the Times"—a book which I warmly recommend to you—tells an anecdote of a "pleader who, on being applied to by a client to undertake her cause, upon perceiving the coldness of her manner in stating her case, told the applicant he did not credit her tale." Stung by this reflection upon her veracity, and this disbelief of her grievance, she rose into strong emotion, and affirmed with expressive vehemence the truth of

her story. "Now," said he, "I believe you."*

"With regard to the *Exordium* of a sermon, it is advisable not to lose much time over it. It is a great thing to arrest the attention at first by a short and pithy sentence or two. Throw thought, pith, and strength into the opening remarks. It is a great mistake to begin a discourse weakly or carelessly."† "Let your onset," writes l'Abbé Mullois, "be bold and vigorous."‡ But a high-flown *exordium* is a mistake. It cannot be sustained throughout the sermon. The homely saying will almost certainly be fulfilled: "He went up like a rocket, and came down like a stick." You excite your hearers too soon. Be content with arresting them.

You will of course desire, not only to give your sermon throughout a scriptural cast and tone but, in the spirit of your Church, to base everything on Holy Scripture, and to

* P. 152. Third Edition.

† See Lecture on Preaching at the end of this vol., p. 245.

‡ "The Clergy and the Pulpit in their Relations to the People," by M. l'Abbé Isidore Mullois, ch. iii., p. 101.

prove everything which needs proof by Holy Scripture. But this may be carried to excess. Avoid mere *Concordance* preaching. By this is meant needless multiplication of proofs by over-copious quotations. No need to cite half a dozen texts to prove a point, unless they prove it in different aspects and bearings. Strictly, one text is enough, if clearly to your point. People grow weary of a mere string of texts. And it gives the impression that you are taking refuge in quotation to eke out your scanty thoughts.

Long sentences are a great mistake: with the illiterate, a fatal one. They are soon lost in the mazes of your syntax, however readily you may parse them. But, although short sentences should be the rule, a longer one may now and then be brought in. An uninterrupted flow of very short sentences becomes wearisome. But the longer must not be very long. Again to quote Aristotle:—"Δεῖ δὲ καὶ τὰ κῶλα, καὶ τὰς περίοδους, μήτε μειούρους εἶναι, μήτε μακράς. Τὸ μέν γὰρ μικρὸν προσπταίειν πολλάκις ποιεῖ τὸν ἀκροατήν· ἀνάγκη γὰο ὅταν ἔτι ὁρμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ

πόῤῥω καὶ τὸ μέτρον οὗ ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὅρου, ἀντισπασθῇ παυσαμένου, οἷον προσπταίειν γίγνεσθαι διὰ τὴν ἀντίκρουσιν. Τὰ δὲ μακρὰ ἀπολείπεσθαι ποιεῖ. . . ."—*Rhetoric*, iii. 9.

There is often great grandeur in the roll and sweep of the lengthened reasonings or majestic perorations of Chalmers, Edward Irving, Melvill, and Archer Butler, but they would not be followed to the end by hearers of uncultivated minds. Avoid *rambling*. Aim at unity and cohesion of thought. Have an aim. Keep it always and definitely before you. I quote one of Rowland Hill's oddities, not for its decorum but, for its lesson. He said once of a subject, "It will naturally divide itself into three parts. First, we shall go *into* the subject; secondly, we shall go *round about* the subject; thirdly, we shall go *away from* the subject altogether." My advice is, take his first division only. Don't go *round about* the subject; still less *away from* the subject altogether. *Into* it your hearers may follow you; they will decline to follow you *round about*, or *away from* it altogether. At any

rate, they will complain that you led them out of it.*

Whether or no you are purposing to make *Extempore Preaching* your rule, I entirely concur in the advice that, with very rare exceptions, it will be wise to keep up, for a considerable period, the habit of written composition. Should you have a gift of ready thought and fluent utterance, your case is a very rare one if you will not be the better for the practice of writing. For bear in mind that, while ready thought and fluent utterance are most valuable gifts, they have obviously their corresponding danger, and that a very serious one. You may, unconsciously to yourself, mistake fluency of speech for solid thought, mere words for matter. Writing will help to clearness and compactness of thought. You will detect on paper froth and emptiness, which will escape your notice when speaking. Excitement—the feeling that you dare not stop, but must

* See some very lively and interesting papers on "Rowland Hill," by Rev. Edwin Paxton Hood, in the *Sunday at Home*, March, 1877.

go on saying *something*, however little you may have to say—the satisfaction that you are not brought to a stop for lack of words—may blind you to what your hearers are feeling painfully, that you are doing little, if anything, else than talking. If experience and honest self-criticism tell you that you have not a gift for extempore speaking, that no cultivation or practice will put you at your ease, and make you a ready speaker, recognise the fact that this gift is denied you, and that your usefulness does not lie in that direction. I do not mean by this that you should not give yourself a fair trial. You may try your powers on small occasions, and before listeners with whom you are comparatively at ease. But if, after fair and full trial, you feel that you are not gaining courage, ease, and fluency, be not disheartened. Many a man has been an able and useful minister—some have been great in their pulpits too—who have not been extempore preachers. But, while I say this, I must not conceal my conviction that there is no congregation with whom

good extempore preaching is not the more effective. Years ago there was a foolish prejudice against it. But let it be seen that extempore preaching does not mean thoughtless and unstudied preaching, but, on the contrary, the results of thoughtful study, so completely mastered as that you can give them appropriate, facile, and forcible utterance; and there can be no question of its being the more excellent way, especially with country-folk and with the poor. Mr. Gladstone tells us that Dr. Döllinger once said to him, "Depend upon it, if the Church of England is to make way, and be a thoroughly National Church, (he did not speak of competition with Nonconformists at all, but in its relation to the great bulk and body of the people,) they must give up the practice of preaching from written sermons.'" But, adds Mr. Gladstone, "It is only out of the full heart, and likewise out of the well-furnished mind, that good extemporaneous preaching can proceed."*

* *The Times*, March 23rd, 1877, *Report of Conference on "Pew and Pulpit."*

A man must be a very good writer of sermons, and must deliver his sermon with great ease, to hold the attention of such hearers by a read sermon. To be tied to the book, never able to look at your people, not to move arm nor hand—for natural action is very difficult with a written sermon, and generally means a formal repetition of one or two mechanical movements—this is fatal with the poor, except in very rare cases. These rare cases are when the preacher has so mastered his sermon as to be nearly independent of his manuscript, and when he has a very earnest, pointed manner of delivery.

Two such exceptions I can remember. They were very different preachers, in almost every respect—Henry Blunt and Henry Melvill. The former, as his published volumes show, was a very model of simplicity, both in matter and manner. He seldom grappled with deep theological difficulties; his sermons had no subtle logic in them, no lofty flights of rhetoric. I never saw him lift an arm—seldom, if ever, a

hand—when preaching. But my memory retains him as one of the most impressive preachers I ever heard. He spoke from the heart to the heart, with a calm, grave, penetrating earnestness. I felt, if I may so say, as if he had my conscience in his hand. Henry Melvill consecrated the powers of a second wrangler and a first Smith's prizeman mainly to the preaching of Christ's gospel. He *wrote* his sermons. They will not die. Not seldom he grappled with difficult subjects and difficult texts. You may follow for yourself the closeness of his logic, the thrilling power of his rhetoric, and the keen home-thrusts of his appeals to the conscience and the heart. He used no vehement action. But he was on fire with his message, and the effect can never be forgotten, after but once hearing. I adduce these two examples of preachers —very different from each other, but each great in his own gifts and usefulness—to show that there are rare cases in which the written sermon may equal or surpass the extempore sermon in power and effect.

I leave this well-worn topic, which, however, could not be left altogether untouched, as one on which you must carefully and conscientiously decide for yourself, after trial, and upon the honest advice of those who have heard you make the trial. Some men will never succeed. Many will fail at first, and afterwards attain. Aim at it as worth painstaking trial. But if you feel constrained to give it up, remember for your comfort that your efficiency and usefulness by no means turn on this only; for, as I have said already, many men have been able ministers, and even great—great in usefulness—as preachers without it.

I cannot better close this my fourth letter than in the words of one of the foremost of modern preachers, Robert Hall—words which of themselves attest his eloquence as containing a sublime accommodation of one of the sublimest of the visions of the Apocalypse: "Are you desirous of fixing the attention of your hearers strongly on their everlasting concerns? No peculiar refinement of thought, no subtlety of reason-

ing, much less the pompous exaggerations of secular eloquence, are wanted for the purpose: you have only to imbibe deeply the mind of Christ, to let His doctrine inspire your heart, and *your situation, in comparison to other speakers, will resemble that of the angel of the Apocalypse, who was seen standing in the sun.* Draw your instructions immediately from the Bible; the more immediately they are derived from that source, and the less they are tinctured with human distinctions and refinements, the more salutary, and the more efficacious. Let them be taken fresh from the spring."*

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

* "Discourse on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister." Robert Hall's works. Bohn's edition. Vol. ii., p. 186.

V.

The Work of the Ministry.

I. Pulpit Preparation (*continued*).

II. In the Pulpit.

My Dear Brother,—I have but little to add with reference to the general work of Pulpit Preparation. A word, however, about *Illustration* and *Anecdote*. The former, if clear and apposite, will be *telling* with all classes of hearers, the educated as well as the uneducated. But your illustrations must be well chosen, and not strained. Neither must they be used too profusely. Neither must you mistake them for arguments. You will never excel greatly in illustration, unless you have a special gift for it. But much may be done by an observant eye and varied reading. You will thus draw upon natural objects and pheno-

mena in the physical world, and upon your literary stores, and strengthen any natural turn you may have for discerning resemblances and analogies. It was a homely, but telling illustration, when a preacher said, "When we pass a shop on a week-day, and see the shutters *up*, we suppose that there is a dead *body* there; when we pass a shop on Sunday, and see the shutters *down*, we know that there is a dead *soul* there." Julius Hare has a striking illustration when, speaking of the truth being heard heedlessly without faith, and therefore without impression, he compares it to "the wind through an archway." Such illustrations are seldom forgotten. As to *Anecdote*, I cannot go so far as the *Wykehamist*, whose "Papers on Preaching" are well worth reading, when he says, "In every sermon give us at least a good anecdote." If it were desirable, I do not believe it possible. No man who preaches very often can command such a store of opposite and well-authenticated anecdotes as to produce one for every sermon. He

will be tempted to drag in such as are unsuitable for the pulpit, or such as do not sufficiently illustrate his subject.

You will observe that I have used the term "well-authenticated;" for you must not leave room for the suspicion that you have picked up a good story, and, after the fashion of the tellers of good stories, embellished it, without authenticating it. I am afraid that in our platform speaking we are not sufficiently careful on this point. Often at a dinner-table "a good story" may be laughed at, but there is a very considerable residuum of incredulity when the laugh is over. "Made to tell" whisper the hearers. Let your anecdotes be trustworthy, and introduce them in such a way as to remove from the minds of your hearers all doubt as to their truth. But at best, while a good anecdote gives liveliness, and helps to point the truth which it illustrates, excess of anecdote introduces somewhat of the sensational element, and your hearers will look for them as a matter of course. You may be much more free in

the use of anecdote with the poor and with rustic congregations.

As it is well to begin your sermon with pith, point, and power, so it is well to end it in like manner; sometimes with a longer peroration, in which your hearers see that you are coming to a close, and are carried along with you, as you sum up the main points of your sermon, and concentrate them, in their personal and practical bearings, upon their consciences and hearts. But sometimes, and especially with those who are less able to follow long sentences, it is well to end with a short, weighty, and even startling sentence. For example, one who was no mere popular preacher in his day, but solid and sterling—the late John Hambleton, of Islington—ends a sermon on the Sabbath with the startling and suggestive question, "*Where shall the Sabbath-breaker spend his eternity?*" It was his last arrow, and a sharp one.

In passing from the general work of PULPIT PREPARATION, I avail myself of words reported in the *Times* of this day, as

uttered by Mr. Gladstone yesterday, on this subject.* "One word," he says, "upon a question which must be familiar to all who are conversant with this great function, the question of preparation; and here we come upon ground that is common to secular and to divine ORATORY. This we are all agreed on, that there cannot be too much preparation, if it be of the right kind. No doubt it is the preparation of matter; it is the accumulation and thorough digestion of knowledge; it is the forgetfulness of personal and selfish motives; it is the careful consideration of method; it is that a man shall make himself as a man suited to speak to men, rather than that he should make himself as a machine ready to deliver to man preconceived words."

I pass now to one or two *specialties*. The case of DOMESTIC SERVANTS has long appeared to me to deserve far greater and more special attention from us than, for the most part, it receives. Just now I confine

* March 23rd, 1877. *Report of Conference on "Pew and Pulpit."*

myself to one point of this important subject —our relation to it as *preachers*.

No doubt, in not a few families servants have many religious privileges. At least, they hear the Word of God read at family prayer, and are called on to join in the worship of God. In some cases a Christian master and mistress so order their household that each servant in turn has the advantage of morning service, and not afternoon or evening service only. But the cases are very numerous in which servants have no other religious privilege on Sunday than afternoon service, all the year round. And to this they come very hurriedly, as either the family luncheon or dinner, and their own dinner, have followed upon the service of the morning. Surely, as they form so very large and so very important a part of our flock, they should have their special share of direct attention. For it is also to be borne in mind that, notwithstanding the educational advancement of the times, they are often painfully ignorant. At best, they have had the brief and broken instruction of

a short school life. Pastorally, they are the hardest of all classes to get at. Our difficulties seem all but insurmountable, when the requirements of duty, the mournful indifference of masters and mistresses, and the indifference of many servants themselves, are taken into account. And even in our churches, our afternoon and evening congregations are often so mixed that we cannot be always preaching to servants only. Nor is it necessary; for very much of what we have to say in the pulpit applies to them in common with others.

But there are many cases in our large towns in which there are three services. If I mistake not, in the majority of these the afternoon congregation consists mainly of SERVANTS; and the duty of preaching at this service falls on one of the assistant curates. He has been present at the morning service, when perhaps the church has been full, the service lively and stirring, and, may be, the sermon powerful; while the congregation has consisted of the chief parishioners. He returns, after the whole-

some and spiritually bracing excitement of such a service, to the same church, after an interval of less than three hours, and in many cases finds a comparatively sparse congregation, consisting almost exclusively of servants. Such cases, although not the rule, are not rare. The temptation to indifference and sluggishness is great, both in the prayer desk and in the pulpit. The morning service and sermon deserve all his strength. But anything will do for servants!

Nay, my Brother. I have long been strongly convinced that if younger brethren, in the early days of their ministry, when placed in the position which I have described, would *lay themselves out for* SERVANTS, they might do a much-needed, a great, and blessed work; not always by preaching *special sermons* to servants *as such;* not by avowedly singling them out as a class, but by throwing themselves heartily and earnestly into this service, and by adapting their sermons to their case and capacities. To preach specially to servants, *as such*, is not a work for which, as a rule, young clergymen

—certainly not bachelors in lodgings—are peculiarly fitted, unless they have had previous opportunities of observation and experience in their old home-life.

But what I would urge is this,—put away from you the wicked thought, "They are only servants—anything will do for them." Remember, their souls are as precious as the souls of their masters and mistresses in hall and mansion. Death, judgment, and eternity are as awful and as pressing realities to housekeeper and butler, lady's-maid and nurse, cook and housemaid, valet and coachman, footman and groom, and to the humble wench from the scullery, as to the *influential* congregations for whom we put forth all our strength. Remember, too, and realize, that in not a few cases nearly all the spiritual instruction which these sheep of your flock receive is from you. The dreariness of many an afternoon service, and the sleepiness of many an afternoon congregation, lie to a large extent at the clergyman's door. I know you are at a great disadvantage. The afternoon is a sleepy

time of day to most of us, especially if we hurry from a meal to church. But there your congregation is; and if there be special difficulties, you must nerve yourself to meet them, and as far as may be to overcome them. There is room for great improvement in our afternoon services. They are often bald, cold, sleepy affairs. If you are so situated as to be able to make the experiment, try whether a devout, warm, simple service, with suitable, stirring, loving preaching, will not draw to your church devout worshippers of the servant class, and keep them awake, and win the servants of men to be the servants of God.

Of course, where the congregation consists largely of servants, occasional special sermons, pointedly adapted to their case, are most desirable. I know a clergyman who valued as one of the best testimonies to his pulpit ministry the remark of a servant, overheard by a friend, after a sermon specially addressed to servants: "One would think he had been a servant himself!" Too often it is with servants, spec-

ially rustics, as with Tennyson's "Northern Farmer Old Style":—

"An' 'eerd un a bummin' awäay loike a buzzard clock ower my 'eäd,
An' I never knawed whot a meän'd, but I thowt a 'ad summut to säay,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awäay."

Servants have their peculiar trials, dangers, and besetting sins, and some unsound principles, or at any rate practices, in their code of morals. One of the most startling effects I ever saw produced by any pulpit utterance was when a preacher, addressing a large congregation of servants, alluded in plain, homely, language (calling a spade a spade) to the notion which many servants have that filching from the tea-caddy is no sin: "Whatever you call yourself," said the preacher, "God calls you *a thief*." The words sent an electric shock through the congregation.

Be not afraid of being too homely, of descending too minutely and familiarly into details. The example of St. Paul is before

you. He introduces one of his most comprehensive and condensed statements of gospel truth, as you will remember, by bidding Timothy "exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity;" and then sets to us preachers an example in more than one respect; for he goes on to lay down the grand motive, "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," etc.; thus showing us that the homeliest duties of the homeliest folk are to be urged on the highest and holiest motives; and showing us, too, that he who, when building up Ephesian and Colossian saints, could handle the noblest themes, and rise, as in the close of the eighth chapter to the Romans, to the highest flight of glowing eloquence, in setting forth the saint's standing and privileges in Christ Jesus, did not think it beneath Titus or beneath himself to tell a servant that his duty as a Christian forbad him to pilfer or to give a saucy answer.

I have a shrewd suspicion that there is room for plain speaking to some of the housekeepers, butlers, grooms, and cooks in London and elsewhere. The golden rule applied to their dealings with the time, property, and characters of their master and mistress would work out some startling results in the ethics of our servants, and "flutter the Volscians," in the kitchen and servants' hall. To help you in the art of speaking "in a language understanded by such classes," town and country servants, or a rustic congregation, so that you may not fly over their heads, you will find the sermons of Augustus Hare very useful. You will see that it is possible for a man of high intellect, ability, and refinement to be plain spoken without being coarse.

Another *specialty* on which I would speak briefly—PREACHING TO CHILDREN. Happily, within the last few years, CHILDREN'S SERVICES have been multiplied. Apart from these, I would strongly recommend that, in your ordinary sermons, you should point a few words at the children in your congre-

gation, whenever the subject allows it. We are too apt to overlook them. Very much of what we say is necessarily above them. They thus fall into the habit of thinking that the sermon is not for them. But if we watch for our opportunity, and they see that, at any point in our sermon, we can turn to them with a few simple, fatherly words, depend upon it these will tell upon the mind, and be treasured in the memory of many a little one, and the children will gradually fall into a habit of listening, because there may be some word for them.

But it is of PREACHING TO CHILDREN that I now speak more particularly.

First, do not look upon it as an easy thing which requires neither preparation nor pains. To preach suitably and effectively to children is far more difficult than to preach suitably and effectively to adults. *Experto crede.* Here your powers of *illustration* may have free play. Now you may be more liberal with your *anecdotes.* But here, too, there may be excess. True, you must gain and hold their attention. You must try

(success is hard, but you must try) that every eye from every little face may be fixed on you, and that not a child may fall off into a doze, or find escape from your prosiness in playing and making his neighbours his playfellows. But it is not wholesome for children to look in a sermon for illustrations and anecdotes only. The sermon must not become an amusement. There is great danger here to the preacher. We are all in God's house—at any rate, even in the schoolhouse, we are gathered together for God's worship. Gravity, solemnity, must be our prevailing spirit. Our illustrations must not be ludicrous, our stories must not be funny. These cautions are not uncalled-for.

We have an inexhaustible storehouse in the Bible. It is very full of narrative, history, and biography, with their lessons of example and warning. Remember that children do not take in abstract ideas. Preach to them in the concrete. Be graphic. Be incisive. You will want to ground them in doctrine, not only to give

a few moral precepts. The doctrines which, as theologians, we designate as Adoption, Regeneration, Repentance, Conversion, Absolution, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification, may be all taught graphically, and in the concrete, from Bible narratives, specially from the miracles and parables, and sometimes, too, from a striking type. For example, you must be a very poor teacher of children indeed, if you cannot use the story of Naaman as illustrating the disease of sin —the simplicity and efficacy of the gospel remedy—the action of faith—the pride of man's natural heart. The sins of selfishness, lying, disobedience to parents, covetousness, bad temper, envy, jealousy, revenge, etc., may all be taught from Bible narratives.

Whatever may be said about long sermons to others, they must be a mistake with children. You have to fill a very small vessel.

I do not in this letter enter upon PUBLIC CATECHIZING, properly so called. But it is an admirable plan to blend the catechetical element with your sermons; that is, to follow the plan which is found so efficacious by

our missionaries abroad, with their adult native converts—to stop every now and then, and put a question, either to draw out from the children what you were going to say, or to make sure that you have put what you said *into* them, by drawing it *out of* them. It adds greatly to the life of the sermon, by keeping them on the watch for a question which may come at any moment.

II. I would now go with you INTO THE PULPIT.

"The thing that mounts the rostrum with a skip."

Be this far from you and me! Be self forgotten; forgotten man's criticism; forgotten the fear of the learned or great or influential persons who may be present. You will richly deserve the embarrassment and mortification which you will feel, if, as you espy unexpectedly some such in the congregation—haply an eminent preacher—you at once say to yourself, "If I had known *he* was to be present, I would have taken more pains to preach a better sermon." Speak with the courage, not incompatible

with the deepest humility, of Christ's ambassador. Fear not the face of man. As you go up the pulpit stairs, go in the spirit of one who has not forgotten, "This may be my last sermon; then my account." Or there is one, or more than one, in church, to whom it is his last sermon. Keep your Master and your account before your eyes. God is among your hearers.

Coldness of manner, like heaviness of matter, is mortal sin in a preacher. But, as I have already said, earnestness does not mean rant or scolding. It must be, not the harsh, repulsive, unseemly earnestness of a man who delights in fierce denunciation but, the grave, winning earnestness of a man whose heart and whose sermons have caught the loving spirit of the gospel. A hearer once expressed his disgust at a preacher who was wont to indulge in unfeeling and fierce denunciation, in these strong terms, "I feel as if he would gloat over my damnation." Doubtless it was but the tone and manner of the preacher. But the effect was sad. "He that *winneth* souls is wise."

No doubt in the present day there is a dangerous tendency to keep back the threatenings of the Bible—not to mention "hell to ears polite"—a tendency arising in some quarters, it is to be feared, from unbelief of the awful truths themselves. To this you must not yield. Damnation, hell, perdition of the ungodly, are parts of your message. But I have now to do with your spirit and manner in the pulpit. Draw rather than drive. It has been very strikingly but truly said that in very many places of the Bible God seems as one on His knees entreating us to be reconciled. Think of St. Paul as he wrote of "the enemies of the cross of Christ, even weeping." Remember the Redeemer's tears over Jerusalem.

A word or two about *Action*. On this one must speak with discrimination. It is hopeless for some men to attempt it. It is not in accordance with their temperament. And although it may be said that suitable, moderate, and effective action may be in measure attained by practice, I confess that I shrink from the idea of learning and prac-

tising it artificially for the pulpit, as if a man had chosen the bar or the stage as his profession. It will be said by some that as action is almost essential for effective oratory, it is, not only lawful, but a duty to cultivate it, as we cultivate other gifts, or attempt by art to supply other natural deficiencies. But without speaking dogmatically, I must, in counselling a younger brother, say that preaching is, from the nature of a preacher's office and of his subject-matter, so peculiar a class of oratory, that I shrink from introducing artificial elements, and would rather that you should be actionless in the pulpit, than be tempted to bring into it the attitude "practised at a glass." At the same time, suitable and moderate action is very effective; and as I have elsewhere ventured to say, the want of it is a very serious defect in English preaching. The best advice I can give you is, If you have a tendency to it, do not repress it further than to keep it from degenerating into extravagant and grotesque gesticulations.

I close this letter by quoting the admira-

ble remarks which appeared in the *Times*, in a leading article having reference to the conference on "The Pew and the Pulpit," to which I have already referred. The passage applies both to PULPIT PREPARATION and to the PREACHER IN THE PULPIT:—

"The object of any but the most perfunctory preacher must always be to drive something home to his audience, to produce in them a conviction of some kind or another. This conviction may be simply one as to the cleverness or eloquence of the preacher himself. Unworthy as this object is in any speaker, and especially out of place and mischievous as it is in a sermon, yet it may be produced by a sermon just as readily as by any method; and if the trick is well performed, it is just as likely to escape detection there as elsewhere. The best preaching, however, is as far as possible removed from this. Not only does the best preacher forget himself, but he makes his audience forget him too. The word spoken is everything to them. They are too fixed on that to have a thought to spare

for the instrument by which it reaches them. There is room, and indeed need, for the broadest and fullest preparation, and the most careful artistic treatment, but there must be no troublesome sense of the presence of these adjuncts. They must not overlay the discourse, and, as far as can be, neither preacher nor hearer should be aware of them. The hearer who has had no special training as a judge of eloquence will go home filled with the subject, delighted, or awed, or convinced. He will carry the flavour of the discourse with him, and will mark his sense of its exquisiteness by dwelling on its memory, and by returning again and again to the rich treat. Yet probably the very last thought that would occur to him, the very last expression that would rise to his lips, would be, What a splendid preacher Mr. So-and-so is!" *

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

* The *Times*, March 24th, 1877.

VI.

The Theology of our Sermons.

My dear Brother,—We live in days in which there is a cry for *practical* preaching. If we are to interpret this cry as the expression of a desire that we should bring our preaching to bear on the details of daily life, domestic, social, and commercial—on religion at home, in daily intercourse, and in business—the demand is a just one. And we can set ourselves to meet it in the full conviction that the doctrines, precepts, and examples of the Bible enable us fully to do so. The religion of Jesus Christ is eminently adapted for our daily life. This is patent in the teaching both of the Great Master and of His apostles. Proof by quotation is needless. It abounds from the Sermon on the Mount down to the last of the epistles.

In this, St. Paul and St. Peter, St. James, St. John, and St. Jude are at one, as they are in their doctrinal teachings. They come down to the minutest details, to the government of the tongue, to the saucy answer and the petty theft of a servant.

But it is to be feared that the cry to which I have alluded has, in too many cases, another meaning. It is the utterance of dislike to dogmatic teaching. It is a protest against distinctive truth. In a word, against THEOLOGY. It means that *belief* is of small or no moment, and thus ignores the fact that our practice must spring from our motives, and that these motives must be furnished by the great truths of the Gospel, not indeed as merely embodied in creeds or articles, or received with a mere historical faith but, as embraced with the heart, and exercising in the heart, and therefore in the life, their enlightening, emancipating, elevating, and purifying power. Too many—some, it is to be feared, among the clergy—say with Pope, in his well-known couplet—

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."
Essay on Man: Epistle iii., lines 305-6.

I select a few points only which appear to me to deserve greater prominence and distinctiveness in much of the preaching of the present day.

First, REPENTANCE. Is this, *in its details*, sufficiently insisted on? It was the first summons uttered by the Forerunner and by Jesus Christ Himself. And when St. Paul recapitulated to the Ephesian elders the main points of his two years' teaching at Ephesus, his retrospect is this: "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."* He left them as a Church capable of appreciating and feeding upon the advanced and sublime teachings of the epistle subsequently addressed to them. But he had qualified them for this by the fundamental truth, not of *faith* only but, of *repentance*. In nothing that is here urged is there the slightest intention

* Acts xx. 21.

to disparage the urgent earnestness with which many preachers press upon men the duty and the blessedness of *at once* accepting God's message of mercy and eternal life in His Son. Not for one moment is it intended to make of repentance a Saviour or a half-Saviour; nor to imply that God has prescribed a certain term of delay or a certain measure of tears to qualify the sinner for the acceptance of His free and full salvation in Christ Jesus. But in the urgency with which, especially in mission and revival services, men are called on, then and there, to accept a present pardon and to come at once to Christ, is there not too often an ignoring of conviction of sin, of contrition, of confession (I need not, I hope, guard myself in using the term), of subsequent amendment, as indicative of a change of heart and mind, which alone can attest, by the fruits of holiness, virtue, and good works, the reality and value of the emotions excited? Is there not a tendency to rest almost, if not altogether, upon present emotion and sensation, without setting forth

the heinous character of sin, and the prominence given in Holy Scripture to deliverance from the *mastery*, as well as the *guilt* of sin, as a no less needed and a no less privileged blessing? Well do I remember that, in the early days of my ministry, an aged and ripe Christian man, who listened Sunday after Sunday to a highly gifted and faithful preacher, said to me, "We don't hear enough about repentance." I hope the remark has been useful to me from that day to this. And, if I may, in a letter such as this, refer to myself, without danger of being charged with egotistical allusion, I may add that I had, not very long since, an opportunity of learning that this depreciation of the importance of repentance is an error into which some excellent Christian men are falling. It fell to me, during a course of Home Mission Services, to address a large gathering of the rougher order of our people—men who seldom, if ever, entered a church. The closing part of the address consisted of a plain (I hope earnest and loving) invitation to them to accept,

without further delay, the mercy of God in Christ—a present pardon. I tried, heart and soul, to preach the gospel as the good news of God. But the former part of the address was an endeavour to bring home conviction of sin—the sins of blasphemy, drunkenness, lewdness, wife-beating, neglect of children, improvidence, etc. An excellent lay-friend called on me a few days afterwards, and expressed his satisfaction with all the latter part of the address, but regretted that I had said so much about their sins! It had seemed to me that it was a legitimate use of the law to prepare for the gospel, and that, if I wanted them to go to the physician, I must convince them of the reality and deadliness of their disease.

And when I read the blessings pronounced upon those who mourn for sin; when I listen to the stricken David, as he declares from the depths of a heart which the Spirit of God, bringing home the rebuke of Nathan, has broken—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise;" when I mark

the teaching of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in the seventh chapter of his second epistle (vers. 10, 11); when Messiah Himself, speaking by His prophet, sets forth as a main feature of His mission, that He is sent "to bind up the broken-hearted," I can come to no other conclusion than that, if I would preach scripturally, I must preach conviction, contrition, confession, and the fruits of repentance; and that, however great my earnestness in urging men to do "the work of God, by believing on Him whom He hath sent,"* I must not so preach as to send men *per saltum* over stages of experience to which such frequent prominence is given in God's Word.

Not for a moment would I deny that there may be and have been exceptional cases in which the work of grace has been very rapid, and even sudden. But I must confess to a great and grave distrust of emotional and sensational experience, under the high forcing of hotbed processes, where there has been no experience of deep self-

* John vi. 29.

abasement for sin, and where, however great his joy, the sinner does not come to the cross—I say not with the *price*, but with "the *sacrifice* of a broken and contrite heart." Let me therefore urge you to utter often the summons, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel!" and often to go in detail into the subject of repentance, and often to use the law as the instrument of conviction, and so as the instrument of bringing them to Christ.

II. JUSTIFICATION.—Observe, *not* PARDON only. Surely it is a mistake to suppose and to teach that PARDON is co-extensive with JUSTIFICATION; that, in fact, they are synonymous. If we turn to the teaching of the Homilies, upon no point are they clearer or more express. They set forth our need, not only of pardon, but of a POSITIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS. And this point they explicitly declare to be met by the righteousness of Christ—by Christ as our righteousness. And our righteousness not merely by reason of His having paid the penalty by His vicarious and propitiatory

death, but because, by His active, flawless, perfect obedience, He has *fulfilled the law.* The believing man is saved, not only as being washed from his sins in the most precious blood of the slain Lamb of God but, *as having fulfilled the law in the person of his Surety.* Being by a lively faith united to Christ—being mystically and legally in Christ—Christ becomes his righteousness. He does not enter heaven, as walking over the fragments of the tables of God's law, but as having fulfilled that law in Christ.

I have referred to the Homilies. Quotations might be multiplied. I must content myself with two from the Homily entitled "The First Part of the Sermon of Salvation." "He" (God) "provided a ransom for us, that was the most precious body and blood of His own dear and best beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who, *besides this ransom,* fulfilled the law for us *perfectly.*" Again, "Upon Christ's part, justice, that is, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of His body,

and shedding of His blood, *with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly.*" . . . "So that Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in Him. He for them paid their ransom by His death. *He for them fulfilled the law in His life, so that now in Him, and by Him, every true Christian man may be called a fulfiller of the law; forasmuch as that which* their infirmity lacketh, *Christ's justice hath supplied.*" And Hooker writes, "Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in Him. In Him God findeth us, if we be faithful; for by faith we are incorporated into Him. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man which in himself is impious, full of iniquity, full of sin; him being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin in hatred through repentance; him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it, taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it, and accepteth him in Jesus Christ, *as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled all that is com-*

manded him in the law: shall I say more perfectly righteous than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the apostle saith, 'God made Him which knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.' *Such we are in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God Himself.* Let it be counted folly, or phrensy, or fury, or whatsoever, it is our comfort and our wisdom; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made Himself the sin of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God."*

I am not writing a theological treatise. You know your Bible well enough to know that the language of the Homilies and that of Hooker faithfully represents the teaching of God's Word on this fundamental point. But I sometimes fear that, were St. Paul to appear among us as a hearer even of some who are regarded as faithful preachers, he

* Hooker's Works (Keble's edition, vol. iii., Sermon vi., p. 610).

would say to their preaching of *Forgiveness*, "True—all true—but where is my doctrine of *justification* by faith? Forgiveness is not *the whole* truth." And that Luther would make the same complaining criticism, "True—all true—but where is my doctrine of *justification* by faith?" I must refer you to the Homilies—to Luther on the Epistle to the Galatians—and, among modern writers, to the great work of Bishop O'Brien.

III. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.—We are most deeply indebted to some of the students of prophecy in these later days, however widely we may dissent from their general schemes of prophetical interpretation, as Premillenarians and Postmillenarians, Præterists, Futurists, for having drawn the attention of the Church to this grand subject, "that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." It may not be wholly unnecessary to ask you to read your Bible with a view to the study of this subject. And, to say nothing of many grand passages in the Old Testament, you must

be brought to the conclusion (if you have not yet arrived at it), that the second coming of the Lord Jesus is THE HOPE of the Church; that looking for, waiting for, loving His appearing is to be the Church's spirit and attitude.

This subject has suffered from the extravagant and, in some cases, even presumptuous statements of the less sober students of prophecy. But, without falling into their errors, we must give completeness and brightness to our teaching by bringing out the FACT. Whatever system we adopt, as we survey the whole range of unfulfilled prophecy, in reference to the future of the Jews, their ingathering, their land, their city, and their future place and work among the nations of the earth, we must so preach as to keep the faith and hopes of our people centred, not so much upon the incipient blessedness of our disembodied spirit, when "with Christ in joy and felicity," (although this may be proved by sure warrant of God's word,) as upon His personal return in glory, and the consummation of the blessedness of

the saints, at their "gathering together unto Him;" when His work of redemption shall be crowned by the resurrection of their bodies, and this travailing and groaning creation "delivered from the bondage of vile corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Preach the coming Saviour as the hope of the Church, and bid your people fix their eyes beyond and above the grave. Preach death as a solemn stage in life, as a solemn event for which they are to stand prepared; preach death to believers as a departure to be with Christ; but preach the return of the King and the final setting up of His kingdom, as that to which their hearts are to be upraised. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." *

IV. God's Grace and Man's Responsibility.—On this unfathomable subject—a subject of long-enduring controversy—is it not to be feared, on the one hand, that the preaching of many is defective; and, on

* Colossians iii. 4.

the other hand, that the preaching is too narrow? We must not shrink from going as far as Scripture goes; but we must not go farther. We have a model in the seventeenth Article of our Church. In the spirit of that Article we must be careful to remember and to insist upon this, that man's salvation is presented to us from two standpoints in Holy Scripture—*God's side* and *man's side.* The Bible sets forth to us both God's grace and our own responsibility. Some preachers, in magnifying the one, minimize, if they do not destroy, the other. To omit all mention of God's electing grace and predestinating purpose is surely to keep back a part of His "whole counsel." We find it in Scripture, our Church teaches it unmistakably. But are there not many preachers who say, "The subject is too deep for us: we do not presume to touch upon such mysteries"? Are there not others who see nothing but election in the Bible, and who are perpetually harping upon one string—election? The effect of the former preaching is to deprive the true

children of God of a doctrine very full of comfort, and one by which they would be stimulated to holiness.* The effect of the latter preaching is to weaken our sense of responsibility, to slacken effort, to reduce men to a state of perilous passivity, and to a neglect of the diligent use of the means of grace. The effects, if developed in all their full peril, may be presumption and careless living, issuing in grievous sin. The truth is, that the doctrine of God's grace underlies and pervades all, while it is sometimes very strongly set forth. But it is no less the truth that we must so preach to men as not, in any sense or measure, to lower or relax their sense of their responsibility, and their need of diligent effort, and of the diligent use of divinely-appointed

* "The godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God."

means. We shall *appear* inconsistent—not seldom even to ourselves. There is no real inconsistency in God's truth. But we cannot see the whole in its every bearing and relation.

We must therefore be content to *appear* to our people inconsistent—too Calvinistic to some; to others, too Arminian. Say honestly that the full reconciliation of these *apparently* conflicting truths is beyond you. Never force truth out of its proportions in order to force harmony and symmetry. As I have urged elsewhere, preach not only *what is in* Scripture, but preach it *as it is* in Scripture. Truth distorted and out of proportion becomes error.

As I leave this point I give you more words from Hooker:—

"No man's condition so sure as ours: the prayer of Christ is more than sufficient both to strengthen us, be we never so weak; and to overthrow all adversary power, be it never so strong and potent. This prayer must not exclude our labour: their thoughts are vain who think that their watching can

preserve the city which God Himself is not willing to keep; and are not theirs as vain, who think that God will keep the city, for which they themselves are not careful to watch? The husbandman may not therefore burn his plough, nor the merchant forsake his trade, because God hath promised, 'I will not forsake thee.' And do the promises of God concerning our stability, think you, make it a matter indifferent for us to use or not to use the means whereby to attend or not to attend to reading? to pray or not to pray that we 'fall not into temptations'? Surely if we look to stand in the faith of the sons of God, we must hourly, continually, be providing and setting ourselves to strive. It was not the meaning of our Lord and Saviour in saying, 'Father, keep them in Thy name,' that we should be careless to keep ourselves. So our own safety, our own sedulity, is required." *

V. CONTROVERSIAL PREACHING.—Some preachers are pulpit belligerents, never so happy as when preaching as direct contro-

* Hooker's Works, Sermon i., vol. iii., p. 597.

versialists. On the other hand, there are preachers who have an undue, and even morbid, aversion for controversy. As a general rule, be content with preaching and pressing positive truth—the truth opposed to the errors from which you would preserve your people. They will then be furnished with a touchstone and a test. But there may be occasions when controversy becomes a duty—a duty plain and urgent. "Contend earnestly" (not angrily) "for the faith once for all delivered to the saints," is a divinely inspired injunction. A controversial spirit is sometimes uppermost in the writings of St. Paul. Error may be aggressive in your parish—from infidelity, from Socinianism, from Romanism, from Dissent, from the specious sophistries of Plymouth Brethrenism; and although it is wise to be careful, even in such cases, lest you preach it into importance and notoriety, and do its advocates a service by drawing the attention of your people to it, there may be times when the words of St. Jude and your Ordination Vow—to be "ready, with all faithful

diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word"—may press irresistibly (and justly so) upon your conscience. One can only say, seek Divine guidance, and, as a young man, the counsel of your elders. And if a sense of duty impels you to enter the lists, be on your guard against impulse, temper, uncharitableness, and lack of candour. Watch your motives and spirit narrowly. Remember "what manner of spirit ye are of." "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

VI. Should your work lie among intelligent and educated people; if you have to preach to men who are reading the current literature of the day, and discussing those points in which it is urged that physical science is in fatal and triumphant collision with the Bible, you must not fail to introduce an *evidential* element into your pulpit teaching. They will naturally look to you—some of them perhaps—in a carping and cynical

spirit, but others inquiringly and anxiously —for an answer to objections against the Mosaic account of Creation, against all that is supernatural, and against the moral teaching of some of the lessons and examples of Scripture, especially in the Old Testament. Amid such a class of hearers as I have specified, you cannot wholly ignore these things. There is a deep and strong undercurrent of scepticism in many minds. More men are shaken than care to tell you of it.

Here you need the greatest wisdom.

Do not assume that all difficulties and doubts are the result of moral depravity. There is such a thing as honest doubt. There *are* real moral difficulties in the lives of some of the Old Testament saints. Take, for instance, the character of Jacob. Deal kindly and tenderly with such doubters; and with the difficulties of those who are not doubters, but only oppressed, often painfully, with difficulties which they would gladly have removed. Make allowance for temperament, for intellectual idiosyncracies. Do not denounce harshly; nor ticket a man

as a sceptic, when he is only in difficulty. The very difficulty and doubt may be the outcome and working of earnest inquiry, and a sign of far more lively interest in religious truth than is to be found in men who have simply inherited their creed, and who have never doubted because they have never studied, and never felt a difficulty because they have never given an intelligent, far less an anxious, thought to the matter.

With reference to a point of which we hear *usque ad nauseam*—the alleged antagonism between Revelation and Science—you cannot perhaps evade it. But be careful. To denounce men of science *en masse*, as if they were all infidels or atheists, is as unwise as it is uncharitable, and as uncharitable as it is untrue. Many eminent men of science have been and are humble believers. True, some are hasty and arrogant, but not all. Great and grievous harm is done by sweeping accusations from pulpit and platform. When you deem it to be a duty to touch upon these points, remember the

calibre and power of those against whose errors you would warn your flock. In such cases a "little" *science* "is a dangerous thing." Be sure that you have enough of it for the question in hand, and that it is sound. Beware of making yourself ridiculous; and, what is far worse, injuring by your unsound science or illogical reasonings the cause which you would defend. Be sure of your sling and stone when you go out to meet Goliath. Better leave the matter untouched than show yourself a pretentious ignoramus. Truth is strong even in the mouth of a feeble advocate. But be sure it is truth.

VII. One point more. No doubt the great truths of the Gospel are to be the staple of the pulpit teaching. But we are ministers of the Church of England. We would attach our people to our Church, not as ignorant members, blind bigots, or political partisans. We want them to understand our principles. Whence our Church's mission and credentials? What her claims? Why should the Church of England be *esta-*

blished? What are her principles? What her teaching? Why is Churchmanship better than Romanism or Dissent? How do we defend Episcopacy? What have we to say when this and that passage in our Prayer Book is assailed?

Here we have been, too many of us, wanting. Romanists, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Independents, Baptists, to go no further, are better indoctrinated in their principles than most members of the Church of England. No doubt, we want our people first to be true Christians. But should we not sometimes help them to give an answer to the question—"Why am I a Churchman?"

I am by no means arguing for keeping up a direct and constant fire from the pulpit battery against other religious systems and bodies. Far otherwise. But surely we may seize occasions, and make occasions, for training them in an intelligent, loyal, and grateful Churchmanship, without keeping up a running fire of controversy or making them intolerant bigots.

The result of our neglect is the apathy of which we often complain. This is a real weakness, in the hour of our Church's danger.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

VII.

The Work of the Ministry.—Visitation.

I. The Sick.

My dear Brother,—"No practitioner worth calling to the bedside was ever produced by bookwork merely. A man so trained would not merely be useless, he would be positively dangerous."

So said one of the most eminent of English surgeons, a short time ago.*

His words apply, with much force of truth, to the important branch of ministerial duty to which we now pass—Visitation. You must become an efficient Visiting Pastor by *practical experience.* Elder brethren can only give hints and counsels to start you. Your

* Sir Henry Thompson, at University College Hospital Dinner.—*Times*, May 7th, 1877.

theology may be learned from books—visitation must be learned by visiting.

In no function of his ministry does the young and inexperienced minister find himself so much at a loss as when called, for the first time, to visit a sick or dying man. He is thoroughlyill at ease, at a time when he requires all his self-possession. Often he has had little or no experience of sickness in his own person, or in the cases of others. He cannot enter into the sick man's weakness and nervous sensibility. And, what is worse, while he is painfully impressed with his responsibility in ministering to one who may be a dying man, he is no less painfully conscious of his own *rawness* and of his lack of knowledge and skill in dealing spiritually with the case. How shall he set about it? What shall he read? What shall he say? A few hints may not be in vain.

Faithful, painstaking, discriminating visitation will soon tell upon your sermons. Visitation in which you are not content with the utterance of a round of platitudes and the continued offering up of the same

stereotyped forms of prayer, but in which you are studying the symptoms of each particular case. In physical ailments, the life or death of the patient turns, in no small measure, upon the skill of the physician or surgeon in *diagnosis*. The disease or accident may be identical in a given number of cases; but in every case it will be affected and modified more or less by the constitution, temperament, previous condition, and habits of the patient.

Aim then at accurate and skilful *diagnosis*. Adopt and modify general rules by the circumstances of the individual case. The object of the physician or surgeon is to heal; or, if that be hopeless, to diminish suffering, and to give such ease and comfort as the case may admit. Your object, too, in all cases is one and the same. But it is not to be pursued, in every case, by the same means. The physician knows to which class of remedies in the pharmacopœia he must turn for the benefit of his patient. But in drawing up his prescriptions, and in laying down his treatment, he will blend or modify his

remedies according to the circumstances of the individual case.

Here, then, at once, you become a close and earnest student of human nature. You must study it, not in the abstract only, but in the individual man or woman beforey ou.

You are studying a case which is one of a class; and this, I need hardly say, whatever be the result to the sick person, very soon and very beneficially must influence your sermons. You will find that, with a good foundation of theological knowledge, visitation is the best preparation for preaching; that is, if your sermons are not to be mere matter-of-course addresses, occupying a conventional twenty minutes or half-hour, but real, practical, well-adapted utterances to your own flock. For, except in very rare instances, every case which you are visiting is typical of many others. You are studying that with which you have your first concern, in and out of the pulpit—human nature in the persons of your own parishioners. No mere bookworm can be a true pastor. Your college tutors and professors may have

turned you out a good and even learned divinity scholar; but you must *walk the hospital*, and have your *clinical practice*. Our greatest physicians and surgeons are not only healing their patients, but studying their cases, and learning from them every day. The pages of the *Lancet* and the *Medical Gazette* contain every week details of cases and of treatment which are enriching the stores of medical science and art, and contributing to the development and perfecting of medical knowledge, and to the diminution of physical suffering. In dealing with this difficult and important function of your ministry, I purpose to touch on—

I. VISITATION OF THE SICK.

II. VISITATION OF THE AFFLICTED.

III. GENERAL VISITATION.

I. VISITATION OF THE SICK.—At the outset I cannot withhold a discouraging remark, in reference to a large number of cases which will call for your anxious and faithful diligence. I mean the cases of men and women who have been living in utter neglect of their souls, and even in notori-

ous vice. Such an one has never entered your church doors. And if your parish is a manageable one, in which you personally know all your people, and visit their homes in their times of health, this may have been in spite of all your earnest remonstrances. He has evaded, procrastinated; perhaps insulted you. Now that he is laid low by accident or disease, you are sent for by mother, or wife, or child—perhaps by himself. Conscience is awakened. He is frightened at the thought of possible or probable death. Remorse brings wretchedness. He protests that, if he recover, he will turn over a new leaf. You shall see him at church. He will be a different man at home. You begin to be hopeful. Clearly he is impressed.

He recovers. Sick-bed fears and resolutions are soon forgotten. His seeming repentance was only fright. What appeared his sorrow for sin was only fear of hell. The dog turns to his own vomit again; the sow to her mire.

These are most sad cases. They are among a pastor's bitterest disappointments.

But, alas! they are very common. I believe that there are few experienced pastors who will not tell us mournfully that the instances are rare in which an ungodly man who has been thus frightened into professions and resolutions has, upon recovery, carried them out. The smell of the fire of his affliction has soon passed away. Nevertheless, your duty is clear—to do your best, with much prayer, earnestly, faithfully, and lovingly. It is only right that we should prepare you for disappointment. At least, your visits and your teachings may tell upon others in the house. And you are "pure from" his "blood."

It is with unaffected self-diffidence and reluctance that I differ from Dean Burgon, in whose "Treatise on the Pastoral Office" there is so very much which must be commended to your study, as truly admirable in practical wisdom and in Christian spirit. But my experience leads me to question his statement, "Only in particular cases will anything be gained by being quite alone with a sick person." No doubt there

is great truth in his words, "That it is a great gain if others of the household can be persuaded habitually to be present at our ministrations to the sick, and to join in our prayers. . . . Sickness and death are often sent into a family for the sake of the healthy survivors." But I believe it to be of very great importance to secure *one interview, at least, alone;* and this for more than one reason.

As a rule, sick people are reticent about their spiritual state in the presence of relatives, even the nearest and dearest. So I have often found it. I need not say that I am not dreaming of such probings of the conscience and heart as are involved in the system of auricular confession. I am not for a moment supposing that you are in the sick man's house as a Romish confessor or director. But you want to take as accurate a *diagnosis* as you can. Now the sick man may have sins, and fears, and conflicts, of which to speak, which he will (after a while, at any rate) feel it to be a great relief to tell to you, but which he

would shrink from laying bare before his mother, wife, or child. I can, while I am writing, recall the recent case of a sick man who would abhor the confessional, and would have shrunk with indignation had I attempted to be his confessor, but who, of his own accord, told me very touchingly, and with strong emotion, even to tears, of spiritual conflicts, past and present, which I feel sure that he would not have laid bare, had we not been alone. He never touched on them until the only bystander—his wife—had left the room.

It may be wise not to ask for such privacy *at first.* Let the sick man get accustomed to you. Very many would have a nervous fear, if left alone at the first or second visit.

Here I can cordially take up the admirable words of Dean Burgon, who, having repudiated the desirableness of "systematic training" (of pastors) "in any part of the casuistry of the confessional," and declared that no consideration of the sad consequences of unskilfulness or unfaithfulness "are sufficient to outweigh the conviction entertained

of the evils which would arise from the recognised admission of any part of that detestable system which has borne such deadly fruit in the Church of Rome," writes in a passage which I cannot abstain from quoting:—

"For (the question may fairly be asked) does not this solicitude about the art of dealing with unquiet consciences arise out of a mistaken view of what is required of the physician of souls? Is it his office to probe the hearts of those who come to him 'to open their grief'? Is it not rather to lend a patient, yet most incurious, ear (the reverse of *inquisitive*, I mean,) to the history of what does so weigh down a fellow-sinner; by soothing words to calm his agitated spirit, if he seems unduly miserable; or if (a far more probable supposition) he shows himself unaware of the largeness of his misery —glossing and palliating, and, as it were, half-explaining, his offence away—by calm and friendly speech to remind him that not *man*, but God, is his judge; and that not unto *us*, but unto the Searcher of hearts, he

is in reality confessing his sin? Above all things, in silence and in love to *listen;* next, if need be, with a faithful, yet merciful, hand (faithful, as remembering whose ambassadors we are; merciful, as remembering our own exceeding unworthiness) to touch the sore which has thus been brought to light; yet not with judicial inquisitiveness (God forbid!), as having for our object the eliciting of one additional detail; but with brotherly sympathy rather, as supremely anxious to minister 'such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort,' that the conscience of the other 'may be relieved;' then (if questioned), according to the best of our ability, to resolve any doubts or inquiries which may be proposed to us; lastly, as far as possible, to put all that has taken place clean away, observing silence concerning every particular, profound as the silence of the grave —*this* seems to represent, in the main, our duty in this difficult department of pastoral responsibility. And I see no part of it which a man of discretion and intelligence, furnished with an ordinary amount of theo-

logical learning, and who has had a fair share of parochial experience (who, therefore, in *no* sense can be called a novice), may not hope to discharge with sufficient success."*

There is a further reason, and, in some cases, my experience teaches me, a very strong one, for desiring *one* private interview, at any rate. This is when the pastor feels it to be his bounden, though difficult and painful, duty to endeavour to convince of sin. There are cases in which he must awhile withhold direct *comfort*. He detects self-righteousness. The language often heard is of this kind: "I know that I have not been what I ought to have been; but I have not been as bad as some others. I have done nobody any harm. I have done my best for my family. But God is merciful, and I look to my blessed Saviour to make up my defects." These are cases in which the pastor soon finds out that the man is resting not upon *Christ only*. He has not ceased from the vain endeavour to establish his own righteousness, but, at

* "Treatise on the Pastoral Office," pp. 220, 221.

best, is looking to Christ to eke out his defects. He is not shut up unto grace—grace only. And perhaps he has been outwardly a moral man—an amiable husband, a kind father—no drunkard, nor a profligate. He says all this, and those dearest to him are standing by. They hear every word. You want, not to disparage morality, nor to make it out that he might as well have been a bad husband or a vicious man but, to show him that these are no true groundwork for a sinner as his hope of salvation. You want to show him their insufficiency, and that he needs a Saviour. Now, on such occasions, I have known a wife, for instance, chime in with the sick man's self-approval and self-dependence, and, as it were, add fuel to his righteousness. You have before you a very difficult and very delicate task—*to empty him of self;* and she, by her presence, adds to your difficulties. You seem unkind, and even cruel, to her, if she be as unenlightened as he.

It is, at best, one of the most trying duties, when a dying man is in feebleness and pain,

and either utterly dark or encased in self-satisfaction, to set about the work of spiritual enlightenment or of the overthrow of his self-righteousness. Our hearts yearn to speak peace. But it is a time for probing rather than for peace, for conviction rather than comfort. I ask only that our difficulties be not increased by the presence of others who, in their mistaken affection, would have us cry, "Peace, where (as yet) there is no peace," and thus send a sinner into eternity with "a lie in his right hand." After all, we may secure both the advantage to the sick and to ourselves of *one* private interview, and the undoubted advantage to the healthy, of which Dean Burgon writes truly, that they should have the "great gain" of joining us in the sick room in our prayers, thus learning for themselves the lessons which are addressed directly to the sick or dying man. I am by no means asking that *all* our visitations should be in private; but only that we should have full and fair opportunity for the freest pastoral intercourse with the sick to whom we minister.

Tenderness is essential. Enter the chamber very gently. Tread noiselessly. Get near to the sufferer. Speak as softly as may be. Remember his nerves; noise is often torture. Sympathise with his weakness, restlessness, and pain. True, you are not come to minister to his body; but enter into his symptoms and his suffering. Ask what his doctor has said. Avoid a professional, official, conventional air. The case may be too grave for cheerful words; but, if otherwise, let your face carry a little sunshine into the sick room. Avoid fussiness. Be ready to kneel without stool or cushion. Go with a brother's heart. Always take the sick man's hand, if he can bear it. Be brief—brief in your talk, brief in your readings, brief in your prayers—your whole visit brief. Take up one point. A sick man's brain is soon over-tasked; his nerves soon jar; his strength soon fails. Leave a well-chosen text behind you, as you say "Good-bye!" Let your "Good-bye" be "God bless you!" Let your last look be one of tenderness and love. Whatever you are in

your pulpit, Barnabas, not Boanerges, is your pattern by the sick bed.

In all cases seek Divine guidance and blessing. Never cross a sick man's threshold without lifting up your heart in prayer, that God, by His Spirit, may give you the word in season for this individual case.

From time to time, you will be called to the visitation of ripe and rejoicing Christians, in whose cases the anticipatory words of your great Master and Judge will be directly and closely fulfilled, "Sick, and *ye visited* ME." You will find yourself by the side of a sick or dying one who is far ahead of you in spiritual knowledge and Christian experience. In some cases he has been long, very long, afflicted—almost, if not quite, bedridden. Shut out from the privileges of God's house, and from all public means of grace, such an one will remind you that "*there is none that teacheth like Him.*" You will look and listen wonderingly, as words of most patient, unmurmuring submission, and even of fervent gratitude, fall from his lips. The tear

which glistens in his eye is not a tear of sorrow. Sometimes, haply in homely phrase, pithy and golden sayings are dropped, which you will treasure up. Here you will feel yourself to be a learner rather than a teacher, carrying away more than you impart. Such cases, as exemplifying the faithfulness of God, the sufficiency of Christ, and the power of Holy Scripture, will be to you a blessed confirmation of your faith. You may be well versed in evidential theology; you may have mastered Butler and Paley; but in the power of the gospel to sustain and cheer, by faith and hope, those who have passed long years of suffering, amid almost unbroken spiritual sunshine, under the felt presence of God, and in the light of His countenance, you will have the most touching evidence of the reality of Divine grace, and will go back to your study and your pulpit with a deepened conviction that you are not preaching "cunningly devised fables," and that "there is none other God that can deliver after this sort." The three happiest men and

women I have ever seen were three bed-ridden Christians—two of them in poverty.

The administration of the Lord's Supper to sick persons who during many years of health and opportunities have wholly neglected it, but who now ask for it for the first time, is a matter calling for great care and faithfulness. It will be a blessed result of your painstaking visitation and teaching, if such neglect, and the carelessness and sin which have led to it, be truly repented of, and an intelligent and hearty desire for Holy Communion be awakened. The examination prescribed by the rubric in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, as to repentance, charity, forgiveness of wrong suffered or done, and readiness in the latter case to make amends, must be made searchingly and faithfully. And you must do your utmost to dispel the notion of a *viaticum*, as if to "take the sacrament" would of itself make all right. Let your teaching as to the design and efficacy of this Holy Sacrament be such as that you are clear of the guilt of such a superstitious reception

of it as would make it nothing better than extreme unction.

With regard to the use of the Office for the Visitation of the Sick in the Prayer Book, the Church, in the sixty-seventh canon, leaves the minister, "if he be a preacher," at full liberty either to use it or to "instruct and comfort" "as he shall think most needful and convenient." Not disputing Dean Burgon's estimate of its excellence, when he writes, "It seems to me one of the most beautiful in the Prayer Book; while inquiry shows that it is perhaps the most carefully revised of all;"* I cannot recommend so constant a use of any portion of it, either memoriter or from book, as he deems advisable, when, not insisting indeed upon "a servile adherence to it from end to end," but allowing omissions and substitutions, he adds: "But the prescribed form—from the first words of it, down to the end of the prayer, 'Hear us, Almighty and most merciful God and Saviour;' and again, from the words, 'O Saviour of the world,' to the end

* "Treatise on the Pastoral Office," p. 213.

of the service—would, it is apprehended, be deviated from with manifest disadvantage."*

I submit rather that, however beautiful the service, it is not desirable, in protracted cases, to repeat the same office frequently; and that a spiritually minded pastor, taking the office as his model, may wisely adapt his readings and his prayers to the individual case.

To whatever decision you may come, always pray with the sick man, even when he is too weak to listen to reading. Apart from the higher end—the efficacy of prayer—a short, earnest, well-adapted prayer seldom fails to touch the sick man.

In avoiding the slightest approach to the auricular confession of the Church of Rome, do not shrink from the Scriptural and sober words of the rubric—"*Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.*" Only mark the words carefully. *They are a provision for a special*

* "Treatise on the Pastoral Office," pp. 213-4.

case—"*If he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.*" But they are not to be so extended and strained as to cover habitual or enforced "confession to a priest," as "a direct sacramental ordinance of the Church of Christ;" and the notion "that to be duly practised it must be secret and compulsory, numbering all remembered sins."* For such a system of confession—in a word, for THE CONFESSIONAL—there is, thank God, no warrant whatever in the Prayer Book of the Church of England. And whatever the force of the form of absolution which follows (into which it is beyond the scope of these letters to enter), it is, be it remembered, *attached to this special case.* The rubric runs—"*After which confession,* the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this fashion."

For the study and exposition of this absolution I must refer you to some of the many writers who have discussed it fully.

* Bishop Wilberforce's "Addresses to the Candidates for Ordination," p. 113.

Among others, to the remarks of Dean Burgon, in the treatise to which I have made reference in this letter. I quote only the words of Bishop Wilberforce: *—

"It is plain, first, that our Church never designed that the ministers of God's Word and Sacraments should abdicate that which is amongst the most important functions of their office—the dealing as ministers of God with the consciences of men. Yet, on the other hand, it is equally clear that there is a broad distinction between her intention herein and that of the Church of Rome. Can, then, this difference be referred to any guiding principle of action? It seems to me that it may, and that we may find the difference here. The object of the Roman Communion and of our own is widely different, and this difference at once affects our several practice. The object of the Roman Church is to bring the conscience under the power of the priest, to make him the judge to whose sentence it should absolutely defer. The object of our own Church is so to

* Pp. 112, 114-5.

awaken, enlighten, and strengthen the conscience, that with the aid of Holy Scripture, and the ordinary public ministrations of God's Word, it may rightly guide the individual soul.

"Now in opposition to this system" (that of Rome) "the Church of England, in exact conformity, as we maintain, with the Word of God, and the teaching and the practice of the primitive Church, allows private confession instead of enforcing it, and recommends it only under certain prescribed circumstances and conditions, as a means of restoring health to a sick conscience, instead of treating the habit of confessing as the state of health. She treats it as wise men treat medical aids, as blessed means of renovation, stored by God's mercy for their need in times of sickness, but still as not meant for, and not wholly compatible with, a settled habit of strong health. And this difference of view is founded upon a great doctrinal difference as to the place which confession occupies in the new kingdom of Christ.

The Church of England does not treat it as a separate or dinance of Christ, endowed with a special sacramental grace of its own; but she regards it as a permitted 'opening of grief,' as a 'lightening' of a 'burden,' as in no way bringing any special pardon or absolution to the penitent over and above that which he might equally obtain by general confession to Almighty God and public absolution in the congregation, but only as a spiritual confidence which might be entrusted to any brother Christian, but which it is most natural and best to commit to the physician of souls, as having more experience of such cases, and as being specially provided by God with grace for their treatment and relief."

In dismissing the subject of the Visitation of the Sick, let me draw your attention to the wise direction of the Church: "And if he hath not before disposed of his goods, let him then be admonished to make his will, and to declare his debts, what he oweth, and what is owing unto him; for the better discharging of his conscience,

and the quietness of his executors." Many a widow, and many a family, have had to smart for the neglect of this duty on the part of the dying, where obedience to the Church's suggestion would have saved much confusion, if not protracted litigation, heavy loss, and bitter family strife.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

VIII.

The Work of the Ministry.—Visitation. (*Continued.*)

II. Visitation of the Afflicted.
III. General Visitation.

My Dear Brother,—Never will you be doing more directly the work of a pastor than in *the Visitation of the Afflicted.* And seldom, if ever, will the faithful and loving discharge of your duty bring you a happier or more immediate reward. The afflicted are very grateful for prompt pastoral sympathy. If in the higher or middle class of society, they will receive calls or letters of condolence in abundance—in some cases too conventional to be of much value. From *you* they should have neither call nor letter of a merely conventional character. Let me hope that you cherish habitually a

spirit of true, practical sympathy with your people; a sympathy which prompts you to pray at home for all who are stricken with sorrow. This will soon show itself, and be recognised as one of your characteristics. So that, when you enter the home of mourning or pen a few words of consolation, they will be felt to come from your heart, and will reach the hearts of those whose home death has darkened, or who are smarting under some other form of trial. It is true that sympathy can do but little; yet who among us that has known tribulation has not felt that this little seems *much?* Whether it be the grief of husband for wife, or of wife for husband, of parent for child, or of child for parent, whether it be family disgrace or financial disaster, hasten to show your sympathy.

Nor only so. Remember that their day of sorrow is your opportunity. The season of affliction is to them a season of special and solemn responsibility. If worldlings, it may be to them as it was to Manasseh: "When he was in affliction, he besought

the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was intreated of him." Sorrow may soften where sermons have failed. For God preaches by providences. Sorrows are among His most striking sermons. Point out lovingly that this trial has its message. And while the bleeding heart is painfully sensible of the insufficiency of the world's consolations, pour in the balm of the consolations of God.

Depend upon it, you miss one of your most golden opportunities when you neglect your people in their times of trouble. The metal is, more or less softened to your hand. There will be cases, from time to time, which will need all your skill. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." And sometimes the form in which trial comes is so very trying—so very trying because so peculiarly dark—that you will find it most hard to deal with a spirit of rebellion, a spirit unable to believe that such a blow can have been dealt by a just God, still less by a loving Father. There are cases which are trying even to

our own faith. We can feel how they must test to the uttermost the submission even of God's children; much more of those who are not spiritually minded, and by whom the precious truth of His Fatherhood is not grasped by personal experience.

The mystery of human pain and sorrow must be great and trying at all times. It is so to you and to me. But there are times when it presses very sorely, even as we look on the sufferings of others. We must not deal hardly and harshly with those upon whom its pressure is falling with peculiar weight, and in some of its rarer forms. To make light of it—to speak reproachfully and reprovingly—is not our duty, as, certainly, it is not our true policy. Show that you, too, feel the difficulty. Sympathise with it. Let your teachings not be on the lines of explanation, but rather of faith. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "He doeth all things well." This is not punitive vengeance, but, if we will receive and use it aright, fatherly chastisement—not for destruction, but for profit.

Your great weapon is prayer—prayer with and for the suffering. Suggest that you kneel down together. In loving pleadings pour out your heart to the God of all grace and of all comfort. Commend them to Him. Ask with them and for them the faith, the resignation, the comfort they need. You will seldom find that such prayer has failed of all immediate effects. And when those whom you have thus visited and comforted come forth from their houses of mourning, and listen again to your sermons, they will listen as they have never listened before. Their very gratitude to you will be sanctified. Having proved yourself a true pastor *out* of the pulpit, you will be to them a more acceptable and useful preacher *in* the pulpit.

These manifestations of practical sympathy must not be confined to the well-to-do among your people, the classes whose social position alone may seem to entitle them to courtesy and attention. Rather must you be on your guard against even the appearance of being more prompt and more earnest with your wealthy and well-to-do parishioners than with

your humble tradesmen, your labourers, and your poor. Beware of pastoral *toadyism*. If the widowed husband or wife, the fatherless or motherless children, or the father and mother whose darling has been reft away by death, be in your back streets or your cottages, your consolatory words are as urgently called for, and will be as gratefully appreciated, as by the afflicted among other classes. And often prejudice will be dissipated, and bitter feelings against the Church and Church parsons softened, as they find that they are not neglected, but that you recognise that their wound is as deep, and their smart as sore, as are those felt by the great folks at "the Hall," and by the afflicted among the well-to-do classes. That which you have long tried to bring about by your own visitations and through lady visitors, and Scripture readers, and Bible-women, and by shoals of tracts—namely, to bring this man to fill his vacant place in church—is at once accomplished, because the parson found time to come and see him in his trouble, to speak words of comfort, and to offer words of prayer.

To qualify you for this department of your pastoral duties, you will, in God's times and in God's ways, have your own trials. He will make you to pass through the training-school of affliction, that you may learn your lesson; not from manuals of Pastoral Theology, but by experience. Thus will you know the heart of a widower when "the desire of" his "eyes" is taken from him, or the darling from his nursery, or the son or daughter whom he has seen growing up in his home, for whom many a hope has been cherished and many a plan laid. You will "be able to comfort" others "by the comfort wherewith" yourselves "are comforted of God." The fire of the furnace shall make the vessel more fit for the Master's use, and your sorrowing people shall recognise the reality, the adaptation, and the tenderness of your consolations; the utterances, not of conventionalism, nor professionalism, nor theory, but, of experience. For this, as for other reasons, are the ministers of the New Testament, like the priests of the Old Testament, "taken from among men."

III. GENERAL VISITATION.—We have yet to deal with the most difficult branches of Visitation—*Ordinary Pastoral Visits in times of health*, and *Social Visiting* as guests at the tables of your people.

In reference to the former, the pastor of a parish of moderate area and population has obviously a great advantage over the incumbent of a parish which numbers many thousands. The former needs only diligence and system; the latter cannot hope even to know each and every one of his parishioners personally; still less to be a house-going pastor to the extent which he desires. It is here chiefly that the pressure is felt by an over-weighted pastor. He feels that he ought to be no stranger in any house in his parish—that not one resident in it should be able to say, "My clergyman has never been into my house. I never see him but in the pulpit, or when I am sick or in sorrow." But, were visiting his only duty, this would in some cases be impossible.

Should your lot be cast in one of these vast parishes, do your very utmost in this

matter. Let not the hopelessness of doing all tempt you to do nothing. And in doing what you can, let your visits have in them as much as possible of *the pastoral element.* Be not a mere morning-caller or a hanger-on at five-o'clock tea. There is great danger lest your visits should degenerate into mere conventionalism—or worse, into mere chat and gossip. And the danger is the greater because very many who will complain that you never visit your people, that they see little or nothing of you out of the pulpit, are not desiderating pastoral visits, but only the attention of a call.

I do not deny that something is gained by the fact that your people become personally acquainted with you, although the visit may give no fair opening for such conversation as you desire. You may feel regretfully, and perhaps self-reproachfully, as the street door is shut behind you on leaving, that you have done no good, that not a word has been spoken for edification. Your pastoral visit has been such in name only—little, if anything, better than a morning

call. *They* are satisfied, but *you* are not. Yet something is gained towards future usefulness. Their hour of sickness and sorrow will come. When it comes, they will seldom care much even for their own clergyman, if he is known to them only in public. But if they have known you personally before their affliction, they will look for and receive you now, when they want, not a conventional call but, pastoral sympathy. It is a great thing not to be a stranger in their houses when you are the person to whom they naturally turn for words of consolation. Therefore, although your general visits may not be all you desire—and with some of the people it is very difficult to make them spiritually profitable—they will, at any rate, have broken down shyness and prevented estrangement. They are accustomed to you and you to them. The door is open for the pastor, as such, into the house of mourning.

But it is most desirable that, as far as possible, you should never let them forget, even in your most friendly visits, that you are a

minister of God and their pastor. Do not forget it yourself. I know that, in this matter of visitation, men differ in gifts qualifications, common sense, and tact, as much as they differ in their gifts as preachers. Some men have a felicitous and most enviable gift for pastoral intercourse. They can seize opportunities, direct conversation into profitable channels, check frivolity, and speak the word in season. Others are shy, reticent, awkward, longing to escape from mere empty talk, but lacking tact and courage. They feel that they ought to have made an effort for "speech" "with grace," "seasoned with salt." They are full of self-reproach that, however much they have desired it, they have left no profitable word behind them. In praying and striving for this gift, be simple, be natural. Get rid of a mere conventional gravity and attempted solemnity. Be genial. Don't walk into the house as if you must banish every smile, and stiffen into a melancholy-looking official, or an undertaker come to measure some one for his coffin. If there

are children, don't drive them upstairs or into corners, as frightened by a *smileless* man in black, but give them a sunny look and a cheery word. Be a child again, and not a starched cleric.

Passing from the children, let me extend to the higher and middle classes what Dean Burgon says so wisely of pastoral intercourse with "our humbler brethren":—

"It may be laid down confidently, that to *talk religion* is not to be regarded as the invariable object, or even as an essential part, of a pastoral visit. Nothing is more abhorrent to good taste than the systematic attempt to warp whatever is said into something religious. If a man once falls into this practice, he will find it beget a corresponding method in his people,—who will pay him back in the same sorry coin; and some day, when he is bent on something practical, will keep on parrying every honest thrust by forced allusions to Scripture, whereby his intercourse with them will become wholly unreal and unprofitable. The younger folk will acquire hypocritical ways, and learn

to hate religion, of which they will infallibly consider this a fair sample. The shepherd of the flock, instead of being the apostle of cheerfulness,—the appointed guide and friend in *all* things,—will be associated with images of restraint and gloom. After all, we do not behave so in the daily intercourse of private life. Why then in our intercourse with our humbler brethren?" *

Again: "Few things are more distressing than the artificial tone of intercourse which ensues if the presence of the clergyman is the signal for religious conversation to commence. A moment ago, the household were engaged in something secular: a moment hence, they will be so engaged again. Meantime, because *he* was seen approaching, the Bible, forsooth, was reached down, and the tract hunted for, and every face assumed an expression of restraint. All this is fraught with mischief. The office of religion, as we know, is to sanctify the business of the day, not to set it aside: to hallow labour, not to supersede it. More-

* "Treatise on the Pastoral Office," p. 228.

over, whatever disconnects us from the practical life of those to whom we minister is an evil: an evil to them, for it gives them a mistaken notion of our aims; an evil to us, for it conceals from us those occupations, habits, trials, desires, which we have to cope with and to address." *

I will not attempt to lay down a general rule of duty in reference to dinner or evening parties. It is very undesirable that you should exhibit the religion of Christ as unsocial, ungenial, or ascetic. And there is doubtless much truth in the observation that if Christian ministers were never to enter into general society, a wholesome, restraining, and elevating influence would be withdrawn. But there is great wisdom in the cautions of Richard Cecil:—

"What passes on these occasions too often savours of this world. We become one among our hearers. They come to church on Sunday, and we preach; the week comes round again, and its nonsense with it. Now if a minister were what he should be, the

* "Treatise on the Pastoral Office," p. 229.

people would feel it. They would not attempt to introduce this dawdling, silly, diurnal chat. When we countenance this, it looks as though—'On the Sunday I am ready to do *my* business; and in the week you may do *yours*.' This lowers the tone of what I say on the Sabbath. It forms a sad comment on my preaching. I have traced, I think, some of the evil that lies at the root of this. We are more concerned to be thought gentlemen than to be felt as ministers. Now, being desirous to be thought a man who has kept good company, strikes at the root of that rough work—the bringing of God into His own world. It is hard and rough work to bring God into His own world. To talk of a Creator and Preserver and Redeemer is an outrage on the feelings of most companies."*

"Christ is an example to us of entering into mixed society. But our imitation of Him herein must admit of restrictions. A feeble man must avoid danger. If any one could go into society as Christ did, then let

* "Remains," edit. 1876, p. 139.

him go: let him attend marriage feasts and Pharisees' houses." *

In our desire to be social and genial, and to make ourselves agreeable, we must not forget that gravity should be our characteristic. Nor must we allow the desire to "tell a good story" lead us to be jesters and buffoons, or even triflers. There is no sin in moderately enjoying "pleasant food." It is as pleasant to us as to other men. But beware of such enjoyment as to expose you to the charge of being "a man who likes a good dinner and a glass of wine," as those words are commonly understood. In the great majority of cases, a minister of Christ, on looking back upon a large dinner party with its luxurious and costly fare, or an evening party with its inanities—I must add, not seldom, upon the songs sung—finds little or nothing which he can treat with satisfaction. Late hours spent in frivolous talk and noisy mirth will soon tell upon your spiritual life. But it is difficult to lay down rules. You must be left to your Bible,

* "Remains," edit. 1876, p. 214.

to the example of your Master, to conscience, and to experience. It is, to a great extent, a question of degree, and also of your own temperament, self-control, and gifts.

It will be no bad rule for us, in our social life and in our recreations, never to be such men as that our people will feel that we their pastors are not the teachers, counsellors, and comforters, whom they would desire to summon in hours of sickness and sorrow, or upon their beds of death. At such seasons the veriest worldling among them will feel, if he cares for the presence of a Christian minister at all, that a mere diner-out or morning-caller—a mere ladies' man—a good joker and teller of a story—is not the pastor he would care to call in when he needs a pastor's spiritual help.

The same spirit of Christian faithfulness and consistency must be your guide in the matter of *Recreation*. To say that a clergyman is never to take a cricket bat into his hand after his ordination, never to play a game at croquet or lawn tennis, is surely to take an extreme view. The opposite ex-

treme, and a most pernicious one, is that a young clergyman should be at every archery meeting in the district, in every croquet party in the parish. You have to remember that even "*lawful*" things are not always "*expedient*," and that the question of *degree* is important. To urge no other consideration, your people should never have reason for concluding that your time is of little value, or that amusement, even though unobjectionable in its nature, becomes a chief occupation and an end. If you err at all, lean always to the side of moderation and gravity. Strictness becomes your office better than laxity. "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." It has been most truly said, "If a minister takes one step into the world, his hearers will take two."

In connection with this subject of social visiting and general intercourse with your people, I feel bound to offer you, as a young minister, grave and earnest caution upon a delicate point, more particularly if you are unmarried; and this not merely by reiter-

ating St. Paul's caution — "the younger (women) as sisters with all purity"—but by adding, "with circumspection and gravity." On this point a caution, always useful and even necessary, is doubly so in an age in which, to a mournful and perilous extent, *fastness* is characteristic of so many young women, even in our congregations. The loss of self-respect and modest womanly demeanour, which, to so great an extent, allows and encourages undue freedom of language and manner on the part of young men in their social intercourse with young women, has infected the Church, not the world only. The young clergyman is in danger of too great familiarity both of conduct and language with younger women of the middle or higher class. They, in their turn, are often very susceptible and—truth must be written—sometimes very silly. The young clergyman is kindly received—in some cases, a set is made at him. He is admired, flattered, petted. Gradually he becomes a morning caller, an intimate in the home, a lounger, a joker. He begins

to call daughters by their Christian names; and flirtation ensues. In some cases it is well if he does not thoughtlessly, or out of sheer vanity, encourage expectations in hearts not proof against familiar attention from an educated young man of good social position, and with the prestige which his spiritual office gives him, in women's eyes more especially. Never be a clerical flirt. Never, even by thoughtlessness, arouse in a woman's heart expectations which are groundless. That some women are foolish enough to cherish them without warrant—that you have never *meant anything*—will be no excuse for you. Never lay yourself open to the charge of flirtation or of heartless trifling. And, to avoid this mischief, remember that in no direction does your conduct need more care than in your social intercourse with the young women of your flock. I am not suggesting that, under the influence of a vain self-consciousness, you should live and talk as under the fear that every young woman will fall in love with you, if you are not very careful; but I am

urging that you should be to young women a grave Christian minister and an honourable Christian gentleman.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

IX.

The Work of the Ministry.—Visitation. (Continued.)

III. General Visitation—The Poor.

My Dear Brother,—"Prayer and kindly intercourse with the poor are the two great safeguards of spiritual life; it is more than food and raiment."

Thus wrote a good and great man, whose time and strength were devoted, for the most part, to duties which did not lead him necessarily to the homes of the poor—Dr. Arnold.*

The testimony comes with peculiar weight from one whose busy intellectual life was sanctified and elevated by an inner life of high purpose, noble aim, and Christian self-consecration. And if, as we doubt not, his testimony be true, the Christian pastor finds

* Dean Stanley's "Life of Dr. Arnold," vol. ii., p. 56.

in his diligent and kindly visitation of his poor, not only a duty but, a means of fostering and developing his own spiritual life.

It is to the *general visitation* of your *poorer parishioners* that I now call your attention.

It is of the first importance that this be carried out in a right spirit and manner. You must not be a spiritual inquisitor, nor a mere statistician. The old saying, that an Englishman's house is his castle, should always be borne in mind. Knock at his door. Lift his latch—the latch of the poorest—with courtesy and delicacy. Don't rush in rudely, because he is not a squire, or a tenant farmer, or a tradesman. Respect his home, though it be but a cottage or a hovel. Avoid mealtimes and the time in which the wife is getting a meal ready. Avoid house-cleaning days and hours. Dean Burgon speaks of "the fatal error (for such it is) of calling at the wrong time." It is a great mistake to keep all your courtesy and consideration for the well-to-do and the great. Be sure of this; the poor soon recognize and appreciate a *gentleman*—not

the lacquered sham of a mere conventional gentleman,—but the true gentleman, whose refinement is shown, not by an elaborate condescension but, by delicate consideration for the rights and feelings of others. In your desire to be at your ease with them, don't be rough and rude. "He that will be respected must respect."*

I have said that you are not to go in the spirit of a mere *statistician*. You may want, for your own convenience or for public purposes, to tabulate certain particulars; but, as a rule, avoid taking memoranda in their presence. Reserve these until you are out of sight. This hint applies particularly to large parishes, in which you may wish to tabulate population, number of families in a house, number of children in a family, and many other points of inquiry. In such cases avoid all approach to inspection or officialism. Never lose the spirit and the manner of a friend. "Let a circumstance also be stated in passing," writes Dean Burgon, "which is perhaps sometimes lost

* George Herbert's "Country Parson," ch. xxviii.

sight of in visiting persons of the humbler class; namely, that their feelings are *quite as acute as ours*. They do not indeed feel *what* we feel, but they feel *as* we do. They have a code of their own, which there is no danger of our violating, if we be but sincerely desirous not to hurt their feelings."*

You must be a good listener. Some of your old folk will sorely try your patience by diffuseness; sometimes by giving you more of their early history than you care to hear; sometimes by over-minuteness in telling their present troubles. You see and feel that their tale might be told more briefly, and that much need not be told at all. But often you must bear it. You must not appear impatient. It is a pleasure and a relief to them to pour it all out into your ears. You must largely condescend to their infirmity by being a good listener. They will be greatly drawn to you by your patient sympathy.

You will not understand me to extend this patience to gossip about other people

* Page 236.

in your parish. Against this you must set your face and close your ears. You may be tempted to encourage it—or, at least, to allow it—under the pretence that it is well for you to know as much as you can about everybody in your parish; and that in this way you may pick up information which may be useful to you. But such a mode of picking up information is vicious in principle. The end will not justify the means.

You will probably be assisted in this part of your pastoral duties by lay helpers. Your District Visitors will go as your fellow-workers and, in a sense and measure, your representatives. Teach and train them to go in the spirit and manner now recommended to yourself. Not as superior beings, not as inquisitors, critics, censors, or statisticians; but with sympathy, tenderness, courtesy, consideration. What is wanted is not officialism, but manly and womanly sympathy. And, underlying all and dominating all, not mere neighbourly kindness and philanthropy, not a mere desire to set things socially, domestically, and physically

right in your parish, but to win, and warn, and counsel, and comfort, and build up, by spiritual work, as a spiritual friend.

You may be surprised to hear me say that it is sometimes possible to *over-visit*. This may seldom apply to your own visits, but, unless I am mistaken, it applies to some District Visitors. They drop in too often. They make themselves too cheap. Sometimes they may even be troublesome; just as tracts may be left too often, and become a drug in their homes.

I pass on to a subject of great importance and difficulty closely connected with your *visitation of your poor*—a department of our work which, after forty years' experience amid large populations, I regard to-day as one of the most difficult duties which we are called to perform—TEMPORAL RELIEF, as administered by ourselves or by our agents.

The subject is attracting great attention at this time, and there is some danger of our rushing from one extreme to the other. I have long been convinced that it requires very careful and very grave consideration.

Our indiscriminate almsgiving and many of our parish doles have wrought great social mischief in pauperizing our people. The waste of the money has been the least part of the evil. Far worse has been the social mischief, in the weakening or destroying the sense of independence and self-help; worse still the premium upon self-indulgence, improvidence, and drunkenness. I shall never forget one scene in my later parochial experience. At a meeting held in one of my school-rooms, some few years since, one of my leading parishioners, who devotes much time and much of the thought of an intelligent and vigorous mind to social questions, gave utterance, before an audience of poor folk and of working men, to the conviction that they too, like those in the well-to-do classes, should, in time of full work and wages, "lay up for a rainy day." He was met by derisive hisses and howls. "What!" thought I to myself, "have our charities, our doles, and our relief-tickets, brought us to this?"

A further mischief has resulted, and one

which bears directly upon our spiritual work. One of my lady-visitors was offering a poor woman a few words of spiritual counsel about herself and her family. "Oh!" said the woman, with enough of plain-speaking frankness, certainly, "we don't want none of that. Have you got a ticket about you?" Thus, to too great an extent, parson, lady-visitor, Scripture-reader, Bible-woman (if used as almoners) are looked upon as relieving officers, and their spiritual errand is, at best, just tolerated in the hope of loaves and fishes.

Lay it down *as a principle of national importance, that indiscriminate and injudicious almsgiving is a national mischief.* You have a principle of sound political economy in the New Testament, written with all the authority of Divine inspiration—"Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." *

How many a drunkard has felt one restraint weakened or altogether removed by

* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

the thought that "the parson or the visiting lady will take care of the wife and family."

Remember then, that by unwise almsgiving—not to be dignified with the name of charity—you are not only misapplying money, but doing public mischief. You are contributing, as far as in you lies, and within the area of your influence, to the perpetuating and the increase of improvidence, idleness, and vice.

But I have said that there is nowadays danger of our rushing to the opposite extreme—the extreme of a stony-hearted political economy which would either banish almsgiving from the duties and privileges of Christian men, or rob such charity of its grace by the dry, grudging, suspicious spirit in which it is bestowed. True, Christian ministers, and Ladies Bountiful, and District Visitors have been—and are—very injudicious. The good which they are doing is alloyed with much harm. But our Bibles—Old and New Testament—are too full of precepts and exhortations and benedictions and threatenings to allow us to

neglect the poor, or to deal with them harshly. "The poor shall never cease out of the land," is as true of England as of Judea. "Ye have the poor always with you," says our great Master.

I need do no more than remind you and myself how touchingly, but how solemnly, God appears and speaks as the champion and avenger of the poor in the Old Testament, and in the injunctions of our Lord and His apostles in the New Testament. Under these old heavens and this old earth poverty will never be extirpated. A vast amount of it is self-induced and self-inflicted. A vast amount, therefore, may be remedied, palliated, and removed. By all means let enlightened legislation, religious education, the encouragement of self-reliance, industry, and providence, be combined to lessen its amount and its severity. But there will always be room for the exercise of wise Christian almsgiving, because there will always be deserving poor. And when we have shut up our bowels of compassion against the idle, the reckless, and the pro-

fligate, there will remain a large and varied mass of poverty with which the Christian Church must deal, and feel it to be a privilege—a Christ-like, God-like privilege—to deal. We must not, for a moment, imagine that there is no poverty which is not the result of direct personal fault. In the widow and the fatherless, in the sick and aged, who could not have provided for the day of sickness or old age, in those who have been stricken by one or other of the calamities of life, there will remain those whom God commends to us in His Word, and in compassionating whom we may bring down upon ourselves His heavenly benediction. Let us organize against professional beggars and against impostors, but let us not organize almsgiving out of the Church, as if the whole question were to be solved by the workhouse. Our workhouses, like our hospitals, may be due to Christianity, and standing evidences of that care for the poor which Christianity, in the spirit and after the example of its Divine Founder, enjoins. But the Christian Church

is not to relegate all her poor to the workhouse; nor is the relieving officer the substitute for the Christian pastor and his Christian flock.

What then is to be done? In a large and poor parish the difficulty is very great. It is so easy to raise money for the poor; so pleasant to give it away. The importunate and the clamorous, always the least deserving, give you no trouble. They are often at the parsonage or the vestry. The deserving are among the timid and retiring, and must be searched out. I am not undertaking to give you a cut and dried plan. You must, according to the character and circumstances of your parish, the amount of your charitable resources, the strength of your staff of helpers, work your way to your own plans. Appreciate the difficulty; try to grapple with it, and to minimize it, at any rate. Distinguish clearly between scriptural almsgiving and easy, careless money-giving. You must have principles and you must have plan. Never give without inquiry. Never encourage the running about after

tickets. Whether or no your spiritual helpers should also be your almoners, whether you should form a lay-relief committee, are points open to question. The difficulties are so great in large and poor parishes, that one is tempted to throw it off from one's own brains and shoulders upon laymen. But I have never been able to see my way to dissociate myself entirely from the administration of relief to the poor. The example of our Master seems to forbid it. He cared for the bodily wants of men, although His great mission was to save their souls. While then I would gladly "serve tables" less, I have never seen my way to commit this duty wholly to others. The poor will have little faith in our care for them, if we recognize their spiritual wants *only*.

At all events, whatever your plans and agencies, avoid *charitable bribery*. "The household of faith" find their representatives, in human judgment, in regular worshippers and communicants. But one hears with shame of days—past, we would hope,

for ever—when a dole from the sacrament money was the regular reward of poor communicants. I should be ashamed to refute the misapplication of our Lord's example, were it not that I once heard it used seriously by a clergyman, who forgot that our Lord did not induce the multitude to follow Him by promising them loaves and fishes; but worked His bounteous miracle to sustain them after their attendance; and on one of the two occasions, warned them that they were seeking Him because they had eaten of the loaves, and were filled.

Clearly, one of the best means of helping the poorer classes is by stimulating them to provident habits, by moderate premiums upon deposits, whether in penny banks or in our various clubs. There are not wanting instances in which, with no premium, deposit clubs are very successful.

It is greatly to be desired that the *provident principle* should be applied very generally to *medical relief* also.

You will hardly need to be warned

against giving relief *in money*. There will be a case occasionally in which it will be both wise and considerate to give the recipient the opportunity of spending your gift for himself; but these cases will be rare exceptions. If you are well assured on the score of sobriety, more especially, and have good grounds for confidence, it will be well to show it in an unsuspecting spirit. Amid many who are unworthy, there are those among the poor whom you may thoroughly trust, and they will make your money go farther than you can, and more exactly meet their special wants. You will find it very hard to teach and train your District Visitors in this matter. Their tendency is to let the temporal element of their office obscure the spiritual. I am supposing that you give relief, in some measure, through them. They are too apt to degenerate into relieving officers. As women, they have tender hearts, and are too often sensitive and impulsive. All your reasonings, however sound and scriptural your political economy, are powerless before a case of poverty.

Their hearts run away with their heads. Wise district visitors are rare. Mere ticket-givers are rife.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

X.

Public Catechizing—Schools—Bible Classes—Confirmation.

My dear Brother,—"The neglect of Catechizing is the frustrating of the whole work of the Christian ministry." The statement, as thus made by an eminent Bishop, is over-strong, but is nevertheless true, to no inconsiderable extent.

"The Curate of every parish shall diligently upon Sundays and Holy-days, after the Second Lesson at Evening Prayer, openly in the Church instruct and examine as many Children of his Parish sent unto him, as he shall think convenient, in some part of this Catechism."

"And all Fathers, Mothers, Masters, and Dames, shall cause their Children, Servants, and Apprentices, (which have learned their

Catechism,) to come to the Church at the time appointed, and obediently to hear, and be ordered by the Curate, until such time as they have learned all that is here appointed for them to learn."

Such are the injunctions, as set forth in the rubrics at the end of the Catechism, in the Book of Common Prayer.

"If," writes Dean Burgon,* "there be one practice more than another which has been urgently recommended by our Divines, as well as emphatically enjoined, and yet has fallen into general desuetude, it is this. The rubrics of every edition of the Prayer Book have been express, and they have ever increased in stringency. In 1549, the curate 'once in six weeks at the least once upon some Sunday or holiday, half an hour *before Evensong*,' was required 'openly in the church, to instruct and examine so many children,' etc. In 1552, catechizing was enjoined 'upon *Sundays* and *holidays*;' and then made a regular weekly ordinance. By the canon of 1603 (No. lx.) it was enforced

* Page 279.

under penalty of excommunication to 'Parson, Vicar, or Curate,' as well as to the people who neglected it. In 1662, the rubric sustained a memorable alteration. Catechizing was to take place 'after the Second Lesson at Evening Prayer,' the evident intention being to secure the presence of the congregation. But instead of drawing to the Catechism, this had the effect of driving away from the prayers."

I have no hesitation in affirming that the very general (although not universal) neglect of these injunctions has been a great spiritual loss to our people, and that the universal revival of Public Catechizing, by obedience to these rubrics,—at least in their spirit,*—is greatly to be desired.

And when I say this, I mean by Catechizing, actual *Catechizing*—not religious instruction only, but—religious instruction by question and answer.

Is it not a fact that even now, after all

* Now-a-days, when our composite service is divided, the Litany is sometimes read as the service for the afternoon, without a lesson or lessons.

our religious teaching in our day and Sunday schools, a large number even of our church-going folk are mournfully—I had almost said disgracefully—ignorant of elementary religious truth? And this applies, not only to servants and to the humbler classes, but to children in the classes above them, not excluding the highest. Have we not, to a great extent, allowed the latter to slip through our fingers? Are they not too often far more ignorant of these elementary and fundamental truths than our best school-children? They are brought to church by their parents, but our sermons are necessarily unsuited, in great measure, to their knowledge and capacities. Hence it has become one of the pressing questions with which the Church has to deal at this moment, "How we may reach the children of the upper and middle classes." For there are thousands of the children of our nobility, gentry, and upper tradesmen who would be "nowhere" in a competitive examination with the children in our parochial day and Sunday schools.

True, within the last few years, *Services for the Young* and *Children's Services* have happily become common. Earnest pastors have felt that there was a want, and have, to this extent, and by these means, tried to meet it. And these services are most valuable. No pastor who has tried them, unless he be utterly destitute of the gift of speaking simply, lovingly, tersely, and graphically to children and young people, has found them fail. But I submit, notwithstanding, that these services do not fully meet the want. As I have written in a former letter, such addresses may be—and should be—made, to a great extent, catechetical. Every now and then a skilled preacher throws in a question, and, as the children do not know at any moment that a question may not be put, such a plan keeps them on the *qui vive.*

But, for the most part, *systematic teaching* is wanted, whether on the Catechism of the Church, or on a series of consecutive subjects and parts of Holy Scripture. By systematic teaching is not meant the com-

pression of their knowledge and faith into some narrow system of theology of man's devising, but systematic teaching in the sense of an orderly consecutive, comprehensive arrangement of scriptural truth, as opposed to that which is random and desultory.

"But," you say, "you are forgetting or ignoring our Sunday schools. Are not they an adequate substitute for the old-fashioned catechizing enjoined by the Prayer Book, and a substitute more in accordance with our modern likings and habits?"

Let no words drop from my pen in unjust and ungrateful depreciation of Sunday schools. Least of all at an educational crisis when, under the working of present legislation, they are becoming of greater importance than ever, and when we recognize with thankfulness that clergy and laity are putting forth efforts for their greater efficiency, and are impressing upon our teachers the growing importance of their holy work and their heavier responsibilities.

I should be digressing, perhaps, too

widely from the special object of these letters, were I to enlarge on the benefits which we have long reaped from our Sunday schools, if only in the fact that they have brought thousands of loving Christian workers of a higher social grade into sympathetic contact with thousands upon thousands of the children of the humbler classes.

"Teacher," to use the children's term, has not seldom become the watchful, wise, and affectionate friend and adviser of his or her scholars. Nor is it to be forgotten that our Sunday schools have presented a field of Christian work to countless Christians, of both sexes and of all ages, when, having been impressed by a Saviour's love, and drawn from selfish idleness or worse, they have felt an earnest zeal for that Saviour and for souls for which He died kindling in their hearts. These schools have given them a niche as Christian workers. From them has sounded out the call—"Go work to-day in my vineyard."

All this, and more than this, is heartily recognized.

Nevertheless—the statement, as I know from experience, will gravely displease many whom I am sorry to offend—my conviction, long felt and firmly held, is that, *on the whole, the* ACTUAL SPIRITUAL RESULTS OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN OVER-RATED. Observe, I say—ON THE WHOLE—not doubting for an instant that they have been largely blessed, and that many a Sunday-school teacher can give decisive and cheering evidences of life-long good and of rich blessing upon lambs of the Good Shepherd's flock, who, in later years or on beds of early death, have given every reason to hope that, as the result of their teacher's efforts, they have learned to love their Father in heaven and His dear Son their Lord.

But my point is not to disparage Sunday schools—far, very far, be it from one who, during his ministry, has found, in three large parishes, some of his most devoted and efficient "helpers in Christ Jesus" among his Sunday-school teachers. My point is this, that the most efficient Sunday schools are not a sufficient substitute for the

ancient Church practice of public catechizing by the parish clergy. For the clergyman is thus brought into direct contact with the lambs of the flock, as their pastor. In very many of our parishes the clergyman can do little else on Sunday for his Sunday school than visit it. Whether he be a country clergyman, single-handed—sometimes with a distant hamlet in his parish—or a town clergyman, with a large church—to become a regular teacher in his Sunday school is to undertake work beyond his physical strength. No man who has to preach, for instance, in the morning should lose the freshness of his spirit and of his physical strength by *teaching* in his Sunday school. In very many cases he will be single-handed throughout two services at least, to say nothing of the administration of the Lord's Supper and of surplice duty. Not to go into the varying details of varying cases, it may be taken as a rule that most clergymen would be overtasked, mentally or physically, by being Sunday-school teachers. But let the arrangements of the day's duties

be such as that Public Catechizing shall have its place, according to local circumstances, in the Church services. Whether *literal* compliance, every Sunday, with the rubric be impracticable or undesirable for the spiritual interests of his people, as a whole, is not for me to determine. I am contending for obedience to the spirit, at least, of our Church's requirements. In my own case, I have felt it to be right to have a monthly children's service, the addresses at which are characterized by something of the catechetical element; and sometimes to announce public catechizing pure and simple.

It may be that, at first, there will be a little discontent among the worshippers at afternoon service, but this will seldom last long. Servants, who, it will be observed, are included by name in the rubric, will soon find and acknowledge that, if catechizing be well conducted by the minister, they learn more from it than from his sermons. Instead of dozing under the latter, their interest in the answers of the children (even if you cannot induce them to answer for

themselves), and the simple, intelligible form which the teaching must assume, must help him greatly.

"The chief difficulty attending this ordinance," again to quote Dean Burgon,* "is to preserve a middle course between, on the one hand, so exclusively teaching the children as to annoy the congregation; and, on the other, so exclusively teaching the congregation that the children shall be practically overlooked. The former method makes catechizing first unpopular, then impracticable; while the latter renders it null and void, destroying its professed purpose. We must ever have an eye to the instruction of those lambs of the fold who come to be taught 'which be the first principles of the oracles of God' (Heb. v. 12). But this need not make our teaching unacceptable to their elders. By frequent remarks of a loftier kind, which we shall not affect to address to the juniors, but to the congregation at large, we shall seek to conciliate indulgence in respect of the elementary instruction which it is our

* Page 280.

declared purpose to convey. But it is a mistake to imagine that elementary instruction is unacceptable to country people of mature age. Many simple things which fall from us are new to them; or we explain what they have often wished to know about, but have been ashamed to ask."

Only, truth must be told, even though it sound discouragingly. PUBLIC CATECHIZING is to few of us an easy work. Some men have special love for children and special gifts for attracting and teaching them. An electric sympathy—strange and undefinable—is at once felt on both sides. They see in their questioner, not a stern, prim, unelastic man, with the aspect and tone of a formidable schoolmaster, but a man whose face beams, because his heart yearns, at the sight of a group or mass of Christ's little ones gathered before him, to be fed in Christ's pastures and won to Christ's love. They soon remember that he too was once a child, and feel that he knows a child's heart.

It would be absurd to deny—we see it in

our homes—that all men are not such as I am describing. We see too that children are keenly sensible of the difference between those who speak to them from hearts which love children, and those who speak unreally, unsympathizingly, and by constraint. And it would be absurd to deny that all men have not the gift of dealing with children. But you must not dismiss this part of your duty by saying, "I have no gift for it." If it be a duty, you must try by observation, by diligence, by practice, by prayer, to discharge it to your very best, as God, by His Spirit, may enable you. And in discharging it, remember that *preaching* is not *catechizing*,—that is, the strength lies in being *catechetical*. You must not ride off into a *sermonette*. Keep to question and answer. Catechize it into them, as it has been often and well put, and then catechize it out of them. You will never know what you have succeeded in putting in, until you see what you can draw out.

In putting your questions, be very brief, very plain, and very pointed. Consider your

question before you put it. Be careful not to bewilder young and weak brains by putting the question in two or three forms at once—I mean by mending it and patching it as you go on. I remember to have been told that Bishop Blomfield, who could edit Æschylus, was a very good catechizer, and that one of the elements of his excellence was that he never put his question twice—that is, he never puzzled the children by mending it as he went on.

Never discourage or humble a child by ridiculing what may be a wrong, or even silly, answer. Very much oftener than we think, a child has a reason for such an answer. He has some association in his mind, thoroughly blundering perhaps, which prompts his answer, however wide of the mark, and even laughable. A kindly smile must be all; not a contemptuous laugh nor an angry reproof.

Your catechizing should be wound up by a few moments of direct personal and practical application. Don't let it end as a lesson for the head. Leave the impression

that, however much you wish to instruct their minds, your first aim is to reach their hearts; that they are not to be content with glib and correct answers, but are learning lessons of the highest moment, and for daily practice.

The benefit to yourself will be very great —great in proportion to your own intellectual power and to your acquirements. To instil the most solemn truths into young hearts will be found to bring a reflex benefit to men of highest mental grasp and culture. It helps them to clearness and thoroughness of view. They cannot teach others what they do not see clearly themselves. It obliges them to be simple. It brings them from the abstract to the concrete.

From what has been already said, you will have gathered that your catechizings are not to be announced and carried on as for *the children of the poor only*. Stir up parents of all classes to send their children. Stir up masters and mistresses to send their servants. Be assured that it will be your fault if your catechumens do not value and enjoy it.

It is important to encourage preparation on their part, by announcing your subject beforehand. Particularly let your day-school masters and mistresses prepare their scholars. Readiness on the part of even a few to answer will stimulate others, and your efforts will not be frustrated by a dead silence. Let me here repeat what I urged in a former letter. In your desire to interest children in your sermons and catechizings, beware of losing gravity and unction. Let your liveliness be tempered by gravity. In striving to attract and hold their attention, never drop into irreverence. This caution is not needless. It is given by one who is now conscious of having erred.

Obviously, it is most desirable to direct their attention to the seasons of the Church's year. Explain to them the meaning of the terms *Septuagesima*, *Sexagesima*, *Quinquagesima*, *Lent*, etc., etc.; and, from time to time, explain to them any words in the Prayer Book which are now used in a different sense or have become obsolete. While your first endeavour is to ground

them well in the understanding of Holy Scripture, and to press practical lessons upon their consciences and hearts, do not lose sight of the duty of helping to train them, as members of the Church of England, to the intelligent and edifying use of her Prayer Book. Give them, therefore, a general view of the construction and order of our Liturgy. You need not to be told that, in thus doing, you will not be substituting the Prayer Book for the Bible, but richly illustrating the former from the latter. And, without leading them into the thorny paths of theological controversy, point out to elder children and servants, when occasion arises, the difference between the teaching of their Church and Romish error. Take, for instance, *the worship of the Virgin Mary and the ministration of angels.* It is easy and most important to show, simply and plainly, the distinction between Catholic truth, as held by our Church, and the accretions of Romish superstition and idolatry.

Already I have necessarily said something about SUNDAY SCHOOLS, in speaking

of PUBLIC CATECHIZING. Visit your Sunday school personally as often as you can. Your lengthened absence will discourage your superintendent and teachers, and give an impression that you set no great store by them.

Insist as far as possible on continuous and systematic teaching, not haphazard lessons at the judgment or caprice of the teachers. "The Church of England Sunday School Institute" and "The Sunday School Union" furnish abundant and excellent materials, if you have neither time nor talent to draw out systematic courses for yourself.

One great difficulty, often a very serious and embarrassing one, is to procure good teachers—good, not only as godly, zealous, and well-meaning, but as being fairly educated themselves, and skilled in teaching. In larger districts it will be found most desirable to form a Teachers' Union, if you will, in connection with the Church of England Sunday School Institute, and to have monthly meetings, at least, for addresses, and especially for model lessons and prac-

tising classes. In Greenwich, as in many other places, these are found to be of great value to all the teachers, especially to novices. They have the additional effect of binding the teachers together. An annual public meeting or social gathering calls the attention of parishioners generally to Sunday-school work, and draws out their sympathies. In cases in which such plans are impracticable, it is most important that one of the clergy have teachers' classes, taking beforehand the lessons to be given on the following Sunday. Insist continually that it is essential to be largely *catechetical.* Check *sermonettes.* It is so much easier for a teacher to sit down and pour out a stream of washy talk than to catechize.

Looked at in the light of their self-denial, our teachers are, many of them, among the most self-denying workers in the Church of Christ; for they are drawn very largely from the ranks of persons who labour hard, early and late, during six days. We can hardly appreciate their Sunday work in our schools too gratefully. But most of them

are, at first, thoroughly raw and unskilled. Some plan therefore must be carried out for their instruction and training.

A few words on *the attendance at church* of Sunday scholars. At length, common sense has begun to prevail in many parishes. The question has often been asked despondingly, "How is it that so many who have been taught in our Sunday schools drop out of the number of our church-goers when they have left us?" To a larger extent, I believe, than we have been aware of, this has been owing to the distaste which they have felt, when scholars, for our mistakes about church attendance. No parent in his senses would deal with his own children as we have dealt with thousands of our Sunday scholars. We have kept them from nine or half-past nine in the morning, often under a prosy, preaching teacher, until church time. We have then taken them to church, and too often thrust them into our under galleries, in out of the way sittings, where they could see and hear but imperfectly, if at all. We have given them full morning prayer, and a

sermon, if not long, yet utterly unsuited to their capacities. They have either fallen asleep or amused themselves. And, if we have not all of us set a functionary over them such as I once heard a clergyman from the North humorously describe—*a nobbler!*—to hit and poke them as they fell asleep under the pressure of heat and bad air—we have, at any rate, wondered that, when they grew up, their reminiscences of church-going were not such as to induce them to continue their attendance. And if all have not exclaimed, as a young man did at Birmingham, as he passed by when the church bell struck up, "How I hate that bell!"—in remembrance of his Sunday weariness—they have brought away a distaste for what was, in their school days, so irksome to mind and body. Better far to make it the privilege of the elder scholars to come to church, and to give the youngsters and the tinies a short and suitable service in their school-room or elsewhere.

Use all your endeavours to retain older boys and girls at school. But remember

how sensitive you were, when emerging into manhood, if any one treated you still as a boy, and you will feel it to be essential to withdraw your elder scholars into a class-room, and not leave them with children.

Of your duty in your day schools, if happily you retain such, it is unnecessary for me to say much. If your other duties allow it, give some measure of religious instruction in them personally. Visit them frequently. Show that you look upon your schoolmasters and schoolmistresses as fellow workers in a most important part of your work.

But, if my observation is correct, some clergymen give an undue proportion of their time and energy to their schools. They feel—and feel rightly—the vast importance of the education of the young; and their schools are not only *much* to them, but well nigh *everything*. That a man's schools should be his strong point may be well if he have a special gift and taste in that direction. By their means he does a great, a very great, work. But we are ordained,

not to be schoolmasters, but pastors and preachers.

Some parochial clergymen have kept up, as far as possible, a connection between their schools and the scholars who have gone out into life—especially girls who have gone into domestic service—by a yearly gathering of old scholars, and by a reward for continuance in their places. This can be done partially only. But it is an excellent plan.

BIBLE CLASSES, when your other duties allow you time and strength for them, are most valuable for all sorts and conditions of your people. If they are to be successful you must not mix young girls and grown-up women, boys and men. Here too you will require great skill to keep up the catechetical element, and prevent them from becoming occasions for private preaching. I am not disparaging the latter,—occasions, I mean, for your own direct expositions of Scripture. But these are not Bible classes.

It will be well, where it is practicable, to give out a few questions to be answered

on paper. Correct the mistakes in these papers, and make your comments at a future meeting of the class, without any mention of names.

Such classes afford an opportunity for the members to ask your help on any difficult texts, or on other points on which they may desire it. Let these be brought to you in writing, and answered, without giving the writer's name, at a future meeting. You will find that not a few of your people have difficulties on doctrinal or practical points which they long to have solved, but which they will not venture to bring before you, without invitation and specific opportunity, especially if they know you to be a very busy man.

There remains one subject to be touched on in this letter—a subject to which much of what has been said leads up—CONFIRMATION.

You will find no pastor who throws his heart and energies into the preparation of his candidates for Confirmation who does not regard it as an opportunity of great

value. And very many who are now living consistent Christian lives look back upon their Confirmation, after the instructions of a painstaking pastor, as, under the blessing of God's Spirit of light and life, the turning-point of their soul's history.

It is one of the most decisive and cheering evidences of a higher standard of duty among the clergy—not our parochial clergy only, but also our clerical schoolmasters—that candidates are no longer presented to the Bishop in the perfunctory and formal way which was too prevalent not many years since. Many an one has said to me, "When I was confirmed, I was asked a question or two in the Catechism, and that was all." No classes, no special instruction. It is most mournful to remember that their Confirmation was but too generally treated as a mere form. Now, thank God, it is regarded by every true-hearted pastor as a golden opportunity, occurring but once; and, if once lost, never to be recovered.

Writing to a *young* clergyman, let me first say, By all means read the admirable

volume of Lectures by the late Edward B. Elliot, the learned author of "*Horæ Apocalypticæ.*" You will learn much from it in regard to the ecclesiastical history of this rite, and be enabled to put it in a true and unexaggerated view before your candidates. It will be most satisfactory to your own mind to see how, as it is now administered in our Church, it has been freed from elements of superstitious error.

The precise details of your preparation of candidates must depend very much upon their number, and various other circumstances which I need not specify. Whether it be desirable to form Classes, or to give Lectures, or to issue Questions to be answered in writing,—or to combine all these —when and where Classes are to be held or Lectures given—must be left to your own judgment. And, amid a large mass of Confirmation literature, you must make choice for yourself. Addresses and tracts of varied degrees of excellence abound, from which you must make your selection, according to your own teaching, and suitable to

the capacities and circumstances of your own candidates. Only realize and prize the preciousness of the opportunity. Throw heart and soul into the work. If possible, with reference to your other duties and the number of your candidates, see each separately. And while it is your duty, as a clergyman, to make the Catechism and the Prayer Book generally the basis of your instructions, rise, and try to raise your young people, to what it really involves. Now is your opportunity to ask searchingly, in the light of their Baptismal privileges and obligations, not simply whether they know their Catechism but, whether they know their Father and their Saviour. Let not the answer to the question, "What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?" be repeated in its letter only, but show how much it involves. Press the question, "Have you been living as Christ's faithful soldier and servant?" Try to make them realize that the Baptismal Service was read at *their* baptism; that for *them* those prayers were put up; for *them* those vows

made; that into those privileges *they* were admitted. Press the enquiries, "Have you lived under the remembrance of your baptismal obligations?" "Have you made the great choice?" "Are you decided?" "Are you in the right road?" "You wear Christ's uniform. Are you a deserter? Are yon fighting manfully under His banner?" Warn them against the awful mockery of uttering the solemn "I DO" of their Confirmation with their lips only—a lie to God. You will, of course, ask whether they are living in the habit of daily prayer and of reading their Bibles. You will be faithful about worldliness. And you will show them that, as Confirmation looks back to Holy Baptism, so it looks forward to Holy Communion, and that, if they are in a state to be confirmed, they are in a state to become communicants. Many clergymen advise their candidates to communicate on the very next Sunday. My own practice has been to give a course of three or four lectures on the Lord's Supper immediately after Confirmation, and to advise them to attend after such instruction has been

given. And it is well to ask all who come, to come as newly confirmed on the same Sunday.

Forgive me for stating what is my own practice. I am not setting it up dogmatically or arrogantly, as a standard for others.

Your Bible-classes will be found to be an important means of retaining a hold upon those who have been confirmed and taken their places among your communicants.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

XI.

Surplice Duty.

My Dear Brother,—Among the various duties of the Ministry there is none in which we are more in danger of losing life, reality, and freshness, than in that which we commonly speak of as Surplice Duty—the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, and the offices for Holy Matrimony, the Churching of Women, and the Burial of the Dead.

In parishes in which the Surplice Duty is what is termed "heavy" to— use an objectionable phrase—we are prone to fall into a mechanical, business spirit, and thus to lose reverence, unction, and impressiveness.

We may say, with truth and thankfulness,

that, of late years, there has been great improvement. But we need not go back very far for the days in which these ministrations were gone through disgracefully, not as holy services of prayer and praise, but as formal ceremonies, connected with the payment of fees. Clergyman and parish clerk were alike irreverent, slipshod, and perfunctory. The dirtiest of the dirty and mildewed surplices was reserved for them, and services of the highest spiritual tone and of exquisite pathos gabbled through. Men who *theoretically* attached the highest value to Holy Baptism showed practically no appreciation of that sacrament when at the font, and exacted the abomination of baptismal fees, under the pretext of a fee for registration. The mother coming to be "churched" was taught by her Prayer Book to remember before God that He had "delivered" her "soul from death," and "her feet from falling;" but the minister of God hurried in and out perfunctorily, and neither showed sympathy with her joy, nor impressed her with the greatness of the

mercy which she came to acknowledge, in having been delivered "from the great pain and peril of childbirth." The clerk asked (too often sharply) for the fee, and thus ended the brief and perfunctory office. The bride and bridegroom, at an epoch of their life of which Jeremy Taylor has said, "They that enter into a state of marriage cast a die of the greatest contingency, and yet of the greatest interest in the world, next to the last throw for eternity," found provided for them an incomparable service; but that service was first mutilated, and then hurried through without reverence, sympathy, or pathos; the Holy Ghost's own Homily, in the concluding exhortation, drawn from Holy Scripture, being altogether omitted, because the clergyman was too lazy or too much in a hurry to seize the precious opportunity of impressing upon husband and wife their new duties.

And—worst of all, if worse were possible—when mourners, often with bleeding and bursting hearts, followed their dead to the grave, the difficult task was achieved of

robbing our noble and thrilling Burial Office of well-nigh all its power.

There were occasions indeed when outward reverence was shown and pains were taken. The babe at the font—the mother who came to be churched—the bride and bridegroom—the body to be buried—were from the so-called "better classes." *Then* the surplice was clean—the clergyman careful—the clerk spruce. The Service was read with care at least. The Church functionaries were at their best.

I have said that improvement—great improvement—has taken place. But this picture is not altogether one of the past. There is room for improvement, even now, in many parishes.

I know that, where surplice duty is frequent, we have need of great and constant watchfulness over ourselves. The tendency is to a spirit of routine and formality. The familiar and oft-read words come naturally to our lips. We know them by heart, as we speak, and therefore too often say them without heart.

Let me offer a few considerations which may help us to do better.

It may seem unnecessary to remind you that these services are services TO GOD. But are they so ministered by us all? We are praying to Him who "cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked." To Him the praises are offered—even to the High and Holy One, the Searcher of hearts. We are not simply reading a service, but offering worship, asking for blessings, giving thanks for His greatest mercies, reading His holy Word—as truly as in our Morning or Evening Prayer. Surely this should be enough to quicken us to reverence, reality, and care.

Consider, too, the mournful effect produced, almost necessarily, upon those to whom and for whom we are ministering. Can we wonder that these holy and touching offices—connected, each and all of them, with momentous and solemn epochs in their lives—come to be regarded merely as proper and decent forms—things which it is proper to go through—when the minister of God

shows himself to be hurried, careless, and unimpressed? And without sympathy. Which of the chief persons engaged in these services does not deserve sympathy? Surely the helpless babe, born in sin, now to be grafted into Christ's Church, amid the riches of God's covenant love, as his heavenly Father, and to be signed "with the sign of" Christ's "cross, in token that he shall not be ashamed to confess Christ Crucified, and fight manfully under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end"—surely the mother and the father under their new joys and solemn responsibilities—surely the woman who has come up from the gates of the grave—should be met, not by an ecclesiastical functionary and a fussy parish clerk, but by a sympathising pastor.

Surely, the spectacle of mortality, however familiar—the humblest group of mourners, the widower, the widow, the fatherless, the childless, the brother, the sister, the friend, for whom the Church has provided the

noblest Burial Office in the world, should not be robbed of it by a heartless reader.

And, in reference to what has been already said about former days, I cannot too earnestly entreat you to be on your guard against reserving your reverence and pains and sympathy for the well-to-do, while you slur over your sacred duties in the cases of the humbler classes.

Do not suppose that I am urging an artificial, over-emphatic, declamatory, dramatic straining after effect in any case. All I urge is reverence, reality, sympathy, pains. But, if in any case more than ordinary pains be taken, let it be for the poorest. You have to-morrow a baptism, a churching, a marriage, a burial, not from a wealthy tradesman's mansion, nor from "the Hall," but from the home of a working man, from the hovel of poverty—may be, from the workhouse. You will not see, in the baptismal group or marriage party, silks or satins, jewels or costly array. "The bridegroom's joy" will draw forth no "golden fee." Your mourners will not follow a

hearse with nodding plumes—it will not be a grand funeral. But the infant's clothes will tell of the parents' poverty—its christening robe will be its mother's shawl. The mother to be churched will be barely clad, and she will kneel perhaps solitarily in God's house to offer up her thanks. There will be brought to you a corpse, for the decent burial of which there has been a hard struggle—or the dead may be lying within a parish coffin. Now, if ever, be reverent, hearty, painstaking. Cherish sympathy, and show it. Do your very best—simply, naturally, lovingly, with the Church's holy offices.

Do it because it is your duty. Do it because your heart prompts you to it; for these opportunities are golden, and the loss of them great. As you know but too well, in not a few cases you have parishioners at church on these occasions who seldom enter it at other times. Take the Baptismal Service and the Burial Service—what sermons are wrapped up in them! to say nothing of the actual words read from Holy

Scripture. What words of Christ more likely to touch a mother's or a father's heart, or to remind sponsors of responsibilities too often undertaken to be forgotten, than—"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven—" and the record of the Evangelist—"He took them up in His arms, and blessed them"? Oh! there is more than *Registration* here! It is a grand opportunity to have people, more or less with softened hearts, brought to listen to the words of God by St. Paul, on sin, death, the resurrection, the end, and the glory. How much of gospel truth have they heard who have heard but this chapter read—following upon the Burial psalms!

Consider further the help to your minister among the working classes and the poor. They see, in the case of their own clergyman, at any rate, a practical contradiction to the allegation that we care only for the rich and well-to-do. The roughest working man—whose prejudices against religion are, alas! too often grounded on our defects and

faults—will be half gained—not to you only, but to God, if he is made to feel, "The parson married me, or churched my wife, or christened my child, or buried my dead, just as if I had been a rich man, or the Squire, or 'my Lord' himself. He does not look for the broadcloth and the silks and satins; he's a working man's friend—a poor man's clergyman."

Let me sum up in a sentence. I am going to use an undignified—you may say a coarse word. But I will write it as I should write it if these letters were never to go beyond manuscript, and never to meet the public eye. *Avoid clerical flunkeyism*—the worship of rank and title—above all, of money. Hateful in all, it is despicable and detestable in a clergyman, who ministers for Him who said, "To the poor the gospel is preached." The minister of Christ should be the last man to show any approach to *tuft hunting*, or the worship of wealth.

You will be sometimes pained by the patent and offensive heartlessness of the baptismal or marriage party; by a frivolous

and jaunty irreverence. It may not, at all times, be such as to justify direct or sharp rebuke; but there will be very few cases in which you will not succeed, before the end of the service, in subduing such spirit and conduct. Go through the service with great gravity and solemnity. If necessary, look the triflers fully and steadily in the face.

The Marriage Service, read devoutly, will break down the hardest. I have seldom, if ever, found it fail. And be sure, when you have registered the marriage, not to let them leave the vestry without a kindly word, and a shake of the hand, and a hearty "God bless you!" I fear that too often we let them go without this—as if we had done our work, and had no further care about the matter. We are polite and attentive to the rich. The true gentleman—much more the Christian minister—is tested by courtesy and kindness to the artisan and the poor. These points may seem to be trifles. But they *tell*. They will be long remembered. The working classes and the poor feel them keenly.

If the size of your parish at all admits of it, follow up these services by a pastoral visit to the mother whom you churched, the parents whose child you have baptized, the bride and bridegroom whom you have joined together in marriage, and the mourners whose dead you have buried.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

XII.

Miscellaneous Counsels.

My dear Brother,—This my last letter will be devoted to a few miscellaneous points of practical importance for your usefulness and happiness.

Let me speak to you first of your *Relation to your Incumbent.* Happy is the young clergyman whose first curacy is under a spiritually-minded, experienced, and able minister of Jesus Christ—one from whose piety, earnestness, ability, and method he may learn much, and who will treat him with the courtesy of a gentleman, the confidence of a friend, and the sympathy of a brother. Happy, too, if he be a teacher and preacher from whose sermons he may derive instruction, not only for his own spiritual edifica-

tion but, for suggestions in his work as a preacher.

The relation is a delicate one, and needs, more or less, mutual respect, confidence, and forbearance.

Be *loyal* to your incumbent. Identify yourself with him and uphold his influence among your people. He will have his faults and failings; and sometimes these may be a trial to you. He may have his enemies in the parish, or at best, some who have prejudices against him, and who will be ready to disparage his plans, preaching, and even his character. There may be a party against him. There may be persons so far wanting in good feeling and good taste as to try to draw you into their habit of disparagement. If you cannot honestly speak in his praise, be silent. Never allow him to be talked about in your visits, if it be not in terms of respect. I do not mean that he may not deserve all that is said against him. But disparagement should not come from you, his fellow-worker. Say nothing, do nothing, listen to nothing, calculated

to undermine his influence or to lower him.

It would be well were it not needful to give you counsel under the possibility of graver danger in this relationship. There are not wanting instances of painful differences between incumbent and assistant curate which lead to rupture between them, and, as a consequence, to party feeling and party action in the parish. It has always appeared to me—and my experience is now not a short one—that, when a curate finds that he cannot work comfortably with his incumbent—although the fault may be with the latter—it is the duty of the former to seek another post of labour, always excepting those very rare and painful cases in which to resign the curacy may involve the appearance of shrinking from investigations necessary for the vindication of personal character. Under any other circumstances, neither self-will nor pride should induce a young clergyman to be a party to strife which may last long, create public scandal, and do much mischief to the cause of true

religion in the parish. It is far more in accordance with the spirit and the dictates of Christian duty to give way, even at much personal inconvenience and sacrifice. It may be a painful trial, but to meet it in such a spirit will be followed by a blessing. You may see that you could readily gather round you a *party;* and, as I have said, your incumbent may be in the wrong. But an open quarrel in a parish between two ministers of God, who should be working together in harmony, is so great a mischief and so grave a scandal, that it is to be avoided at any sacrifice, short of the sacrifice of character. An "incumbent's party" and a "curate's party" may be the means of stopping, for awhile, all spiritual good.

If your incumbent be a kind and genial man, ready to welcome your confidence, encourage his counsels and his criticisms. Ask for hints. Tell him your difficulties. Do not wince if he points out faults in your sermons or otherwise. If he be a thoughtful and able preacher, you may gain many useful lessons and hints from his style and

manner of preaching. And perhaps it is unavoidable that you should, in some measure, unconsciously catch something of his manner. But, should you be curate to the ablest preacher in the Church of England, do not so far set him up as your model as to lose your own individuality and originality. Do not be a mere copyist. Cultivate your own gifts, and be natural. You see how it is among poets. It is one thing to catch something of the spirit of Tennyson. It is another—as many a poetaster shows us now-a-days—to pour out a little Tennyson and a great deal of water. A painter, a sculptor, or architect studies the works of the greatest masters; but we look for him to give us something better than a mere reproduction of another man's picture, statue, or building.

Let me counsel you also to be upon your guard against *restlessness*, especially in eager haste for preferment. "I never got anything I asked for," said a querulous clergyman to Bishop Blomfield. "And I," replied Bishop Blomfield, "never asked for any-

thing I got." I do not mean that it is not natural and lawful for a young clergyman to look forward hopefully for an independent position and for a competency; nor that he is called on to have no aspiration beyond a curacy. Nor do I mean to lay down as an iron rule that he may not himself take the initiative in putting his name before a patron, either directly or through influential friends. But I mean that he should avoid a restless spirit, and rather watch for God to open a door than be always striving to open a door for himself. You can hardly realize the strength and happiness it will give you to be able to feel confidently that you did not *thrust* yourself into a post, but that the great Bishop and Master clearly opened up your way. Such a spirit He will honour and bless. And when difficulties and trials arise, it will brace and nerve and comfort you to remember that they arise in a post to which you were clearly called. There are many cases in which the use of means may be lawful and wise. But let them be used in entire dependence on God,

in entire submission to His will, and with an absolute acquiescence in disappointment. It may be a tempting prospect, it may be good preferment, but you will not have it unless it is your niche. And this God knows best, and not you. Never *toady* patrons—bishops or others—in hope of their patronage, however true it may be that there will be cases in which you may modestly put your wishes and claims before them. I remember to have heard of a clergyman who acquired the *soubriquet* of "Solicitor-General."

To pass to another point. *Popularity* may be your lot. You may not have sought it, nor even expected it. You may find that God has given you pulpit gifts of which you were, as a layman, quite unconscious. Suddenly you find your congregations large. It soon reaches your ears that your preaching is filling the church. Compliments—flattery—pour in. Be on your guard, lest praise be poison. Elements of popularity are elements of great—may be fatal—danger. Go back to God, and while you

give Him thanks for His gifts, as remembering that you have nothing which you have not received, pray earnestly for grace, as remembering that your gifts bring with them the most solemn responsibility. Pray that your popularity may be consecrated to His glory. Be careful not to strain at the retention of popularity by flashy claptrap and bombast. Be on your guard against women's flattery. Remember that popularity does not always mean true success. Distinguish between the intoxicating flattery which tells you "What a fine sermon you gave us yesterday!" and the grateful recognition of God's message of counsel and comfort from your lips which will sometimes come to you from those to whom God has made His own word a word of power and blessing.

You will make a grave mistake if you look upon popularity as the measure of usefulness. No doubt the gift of preaching is a great gift, and a well-grounded popularity a cause for thankfulness. But, not to speak of the many other functions of your ministry, the popular preacher is by no means neces-

sarily the most useful preacher. His preaching may be very empty. It may be flashy and frothy. It may tickle "itching ears," and be "but as a pleasant song," or as the playing well upon an instrument. There are thousands of faithful, earnest, hard-working ministers, who have no shining or popular gifts, either in or out of the pulpit, of whom I firmly believe that by quiet, persevering labour, and by the eloquent rhetoric of consistent lives, they are doing a far greater, more thorough and more lasting work, albeit they will never be known to fame, than some others who are run after as great preachers. With moderate pulpit gifts, diligently used; by faithful, unpretentious, earnest, loving preaching; by vigilant and untiring oversight as pastors; and by holy living, many who are but as the "rank and file" in the army of God's ministers, are doing the great mass of the work in our teeming towns and in our country villages. Discourage among your people the notion that the sermon is everything. I do not disparage God's great ordinance of preach-

ing. I do not undervalue great pulpit abilities in any man. Great preachers have done great work, and left behind them great results. But it betokens a most unhealthy state of things in minister and people when church-going means merely sermon-hearing; when the worship of Almighty God—the noblest occupation of the noblest intellects, whether of men or angels, whether now or throughout eternity—is put into a secondary place, and a great oration from the pulpit regarded as the one thing to be looked for.

But, if God has given you popular gifts, remember that they are gifts which bring with them great and constant need for watchfulness. You, of all men, must watch against vanity, pride, self-exaltation. "By the grace of God I am what I am," must be inwrought into the very texture of your heart. And you must strive in the preparation, the delivery, and the retrospect of every sermon, to realize that unless the blessing of the Spirit of life be upon your preaching, you can have no true success. Amid your crowds of followers, and with all your genius,

imagination, and fluency,—with all your logic and all your tropes,—not a conscience will be pricked, not a heart touched, unless the arm of the Lord be revealed."

It is recorded as the result of Mr. Simeon's long and wide experience, that the men whom he had seen most honoured of God were men of moderate gifts, great diligence, and great personal piety.

To *lay yourself out for popularity* is utterly unworthy of you as a minister of Jesus Christ. But there will come, without your seeking, a genuine, well-grounded popularity, in the best sense, from your loving, painstaking, and self-denying efforts to be the shepherd of your flock, both in and out of the pulpit, watching for their souls, and seeking not theirs, but them; extending your care and pains and sympathy to the poorest as well as to the great folk in your parish. They will soon learn to tolerate but average preaching from your lips, if they love you as their pastor—a friend, a counsellor, a comforter in their times of need. You may be a poor preacher to others; you

will be a good preacher to them. Your life and work will help your sermons. Your name may not be a magnet on a placard. But your sermons will *tell* in your own parish.

So then, when you hear a great preacher, or read his sermons, be not down-hearted. You may serve your Master and feed your flock without any other excellency of speech than the simple excellency of your message —the good news of God. Give God and your people your best, as preacher and pastor, and you shall not lack blessing. The Rev. Mr. Breay, of Birmingham, was a striking example of what I mean. He was not intellectually a great man, nor, oratorically, a great preacher. But, in the heart of Birmingham, amid hard-headed and shrewd men, he did a great work as preacher and pastor. It is said that on the day of his funeral the then Bishop of Worcester, the patron of his living, passed through Birmingham; and that he was so struck with the manifestations of public sorrow, that although not belonging to Mr. Breay's theological or

ecclesiastical school, he then and there determined to nominate as his successor a like-minded clergyman. This was true popularity. Mr. Breay's name is yet fragrant in Birmingham, and his memory blessed, and his work lasting.

I pass to a point connected with your personal temper and conduct. It is Richard Cecil, I think, who says that a minister should be *unoffendable.* It is difficult, very difficult, to carry out his counsel. But the counsel is very wise. You may meet with discourtesies and even insults, in private or in vestry meetings, which greatly try your temper and charity. But you must bear much for the sake of your ministry. You must not quarrel with any one among your people, if you can possibly avoid it. You must bear a great deal, however sensitive your temperament. You must be long-suffering and forgiving. For the man who has been rude and even insolent is one of your flock. You must live such things down. Watch your opportunity. The time of his sickness or trouble

may come. Show that, as his minister, you can rise above private resentment. If the challenge, "What do ye more than others?" comes home to all Christians, much more to you. In the best sense of the words, "Heap coals of fire on his head." Let not his breach of duty to you induce you to neglect your duty to him.

Let me offer another counsel. *Get good out of unfavourable criticisms*, whether upon your preaching or anything else. Do not thrust them aside angrily or proudly, as if you were a sacred person with whom no one should find fault. I am writing freely and familiarly, to give a younger brother any benefit which my own experience may enable me. I do not shrink, therefore, from direct personal allusion. Having lived long in a public position, and been subject to much sharp criticism in newspapers and from other quarters, I can look back and say that very seldom, if ever, has there been no ground for the unfavourable criticism, however rough and unkind, sometimes, the spirit and the language in which it has been made. There

was—and with all my self-sensitiveness and conceit, I was obliged to own it to myself—*something* in it. My critic had hit a blot. He may have made it larger, and may have hit it mercilessly; but there was something in it. And Burns' words have come home:—

> "O wad some power the giftie gie us,
> To see oursels as others see us!
> It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
> And foolish notion."

We then see very different selves, but perhaps truer.

One word about *Secular means for helping our work.*

We are living in days of working men's institutes, penny readings, concerts, etc. I by no means condemn them, wholesale and indiscriminately. As far as they help us in weaning the working classes and the poor from low and immoral recreations, and in showing that we sympathize with them and would weld all classes in our parish together, foster them and take part in them. But keep them jealously in a subordinate place. They

may be auxiliary and supplementary. But they are not our proper work, nor our chief weapons. They may bridge the chasm between us and some classes of our people, but they must not be relied on as the first or best means. For God's great work—the saving of souls—we have God's own means and God's own message—the ministration of His Gospel. Our magnet is Christ crucified. To this all secular means must be subordinate. Beware of an unspiritualized ministry. It is not the ministry which you have "received of the Lord Jesus." Give first things their first place. Keep all others down in their due subordination. We are not ordained to be caterers for the amusement of our people, but to be "ambassadors for Christ." You will never evangelize your parish by institutes, or readings, or concerts. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal."

Another counsel. *Make it part of your work to stir up others to work.* In a large parish, more especially, do nothing yourself which you can get other fit instruments to

do. It is not enough that you make general and public appeals for workers. Learn your people. Keep your eye on individuals. In this way get together district visitors, Sunday-school teachers, secretaries, and treasurers. And when you have chosen them and tried them, and they have stood the trial, trust them. Leave them, to some extent, alone. Let them feel their responsibility. If they do their work well in the main, do not insist on its being done exactly in your own way. Leave room for the play of their individuality. A good servant does not like to be followed at every step in her work, so neither does a good worker. If your workers are worth anything, keep a general supervision and control, but do not keep them in leading-strings.

Some good clergymen have too much of the autocrat in them with their fellow-workers. I am not asking you to give up the reins. But don't use the curb too freely. We all like to be trusted. And trust often makes men trustworthy. It is no bad test of your own ability

and efficiency as a worker, that you call out workers, and keep them happily at work.

And now I bring my letters to a close. I said at the outset that I had not undertaken to write a treatise on the Christian ministry, but only, as an elder, to offer practical counsels to a younger brother. My aim has been to write what might be offered as a gift volume to a young clergyman on the day of his ordination, or early in his ministry. The works of Burnet, Baxter, Cecil, Bridges, Evans, Burgon, and others, will remain as the great manuals for young ministers. If I have ventured to throw together a few hints and suggestions, I excuse my presumption on the ground that, having had to do, during all but the whole of a long ministry, with large and populous parishes, in which nearly every kind of ministerial work has necessarily fallen on me, I have thought that younger brethren might not be unwilling to weigh, at least, some results of the experience of one whose work is well-nigh done.

My reader may have a long life of work and usefulness before him. Let me urge him, above all things, not to merge his care for his own spiritual life and growth in his professional duties and activity. Never may it be said of you, my brother, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept." "Save thyself" first—then "them that hear thee." "Dwell" thyself "in the secret place of the Most High." "Abide" thyself "under the shadow of the Almighty." Live in Christ. See that Christ live in thee. "Be filled with the Spirit." Enter upon each day's ministry—its privileges, its toils, its anxieties, its conflicts, its hopes, its disappointments, its joys, its sorrows—under the "unction from the Holy One." Walk in close fellowship with God. "Tell Jesus,' daily, what things you have done and what things you have taught. Keep before you your great account. As UNDER the great Master's eye, and in thought of the great Master's coming, hear His charge in Paul's message to Archippus—"Take heed to the

ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. iii. 17).

Yours faithfully,

JOHN C. MILLER.

A LECTURE ON PREACHING

Delivered in the Trophy-Room of St. Paul's Cathedral, in March, 1874, and afterwards re-delivered, for the Church Homiletical Society, at Oxford.

In offering to you, Gentlemen, a few practical remarks upon the subject before us—in doing which I desire to stand before you simply as a brother among brethren,—I cannot forbear, at the outset, from saying a few words on the place which preaching is to occupy among the functions of our ministry. And, in endeavouring to estimate this aright, I turn to him who is, next to the great and Divine Master, our highest earthly model—St. Paul. His writings prove to demonstration that, if any one had asked St. Paul what he conceived to be the highest function of the minister of Christ—what it was that, at times, overwhelmed him with

adoring gratitude to the grace of God which called him to be an apostle, his answer would have been, the commission to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ." And if I do not dwell upon the fact that Christ was always his great theme, and the Holy Ghost his strength and wisdom, it is because I assume that this will be admitted by you all.

Neither is the importance of this function of preaching lessened, by any means, in the present day. We preachers are constantly hearing, through one channel and another, complaints about sermons. We do wisely to weigh these strictures. From some of them we may learn much; others are unjust. We are asked for what we cannot consent to give.

There are those who ask for semi-secular addresses. We are to give interest to our sermons by a spice of political economy, or geology, or talk on sanitary matters. But we maintain that our business in the pulpit is with the one great message, and that everything which does not directly tend to

illustrate this—without in the slightest degree throwing it into the shade—is worse than a great impertinence.

It is clear that in these days we have a rival, and a very formidable rival, in the public press. Secular newspapers discuss theological, ecclesiastical, and moral subjects with great ability; and our homes are filled to repletion with religious books and periodicals. There was a time, and that too at a not very remote date, when in hundreds, I might almost say thousands, of parishes in England, the sermon for the Sunday, supplemented by the suggestions to be found in two or three good books, was the sole supply of religious teaching. In our own day it is very different. Things are entirely changed. Men read for themselves. We are flooded with religious books, good, bad, and indifferent, at the cheapest possible rate.

Let me speak first of country parishes. I am addressing some who may hereafter find themselves in county curacies. You will make a grievous mistake—even those of you who may have left college with the

highest University distinctions—if you think that *anything* will do for these people. Far otherwise. As the severest test of a curate's powers of preaching, I should put him through the ordeal of preaching to a country congregation, on a very hot afternoon in August, during the time of harvest, and say to him, "Will you undertake to keep that congregation awake?" The man who can succeed in doing that is a much more effective preacher than is commonly supposed. It is no easy task. If I had the two duties before me next Sunday, I should feel it easier to preach before the University than to preach to rustics in August, for twenty minutes; to get something into their heads and hearts which they would carry away. Do not think then that *anything* will do for the poor or for rustics.

It has been well said, that the work of a country clergyman is threefold:—"You have your mother's tongue to learn; a poor man's heart to anatomise; and a poor man's brain to dissect."

With regard to dangers particularly inci-

dent to preachers in large towns. The principal one consists in this:—viz., the great extent to which secular and semi-secular work accumulates upon us. It was truly remarked by Professor Blunt, "There was a period, and almost within my own memory, when a notion prevailed, that the duties of the clergy were the duties of the Sunday, and little more; but I am not clear that the moment is not come when the danger lies the other way; and whether the pastor of the parish, yielding to the importunate demands of an overwhelming population, does not occupy so much of his time, in the 'goings into the streets and lanes of the city,' as trenches on his studies and his sermons. The one should be done, the other assuredly not left undone.*

Our sermons suffer. This semi-secularism disturbs, distracts, aye, and in a great many cases well-nigh engrosses, the time of clergymen, so as to leave them no leisure for pulpit preparation at all.

* Quoted in "Papers on Preaching and Public Speaking," by a Wykehamist, p. 25.

Let me not seem to exalt preaching unduly. I most heartily and fully recognise the worship of Almighty God in church as the first object in going to His house, and in ministering to our people. But I do say most emphatically and earnestly, in the arrangement of your time, let everything, as far as possible, give way to pulpit preparation. If something must needs suffer, it must not be the sermon, as long as preaching is what it is according to the ordinance of God. Consider the greatness and the advantages of pulpit opportunities. There must be—especially in these days—meditation, study, time, for our sermons.

And we must take a true view of the *dignity* of the pulpit. This will humble us, and not puff us up. When we realize our position as Christ's ambassadors; that we are fellow-workers with God; that, in the mysterious arrangements of God's grace, there is a real connection—only, of course, an instrumental connection—between the salvation of souls eternally and every sermon

we deliver, surely we must have a deeply solemn and by no means self-exalting view of our work.

Let us now go into practical details.

First, I will go with the young preacher into his *study*. And, while there, let him remember that, for the great end of preaching —the conversion and edification of souls—he is dependent upon supernatural power: that this power is not in himself. Therefore—most earnestly and affectionately would I say it—before you begin the work of preparation, go down upon your knees. Aye, and when you have finished your preparation —do not think me superstitious—take the very manuscript or notes themselves, and spread them before God, sanctifying them by prayer. And when you are in the pulpit, both before and after the delivery of God's message, the more you throw yourself out of self into the strength and wisdom of the Spirit of God, praying Him to give you soundness, faithfulness, unction, freshness, fertility, facility, freedom, acceptance with the people—the more will you preach to the

comfort of your own soul, and the more God will bless you.

But not only when you are in your study are you to be thinking of your sermons. One secret of becoming effective preachers is, never to let your pulpit be long out of your sight. "We can only account for this exhaustless flow of fresh discourses from the fact that these truly great preachers spent much time in general, and comparatively little in special preparation. There were two books never out of their hands—the Bible and the human heart. These they read continually. The leaves of these two great volumes lay open before them by night and by day. All other books were but tributaries, which brought, like King Solomon's navy, sometimes gold and sometimes apes and peacocks. But the Bible and the human heart were the reservoir; to these they went, and therefore their supply of spiritual truth never failed." * To this end, study human nature; it is of little use to

* "The Pastor and the Parish," by Rev. John B. Heard, M.A., p. 97.

study books only. This makes preaching dry. Study human nature. We must be students of books. But our best storehouse is the Bible and the human heart. Study man at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances—in railway carriages, in drawing-rooms, in cottages, in garrets, by sick beds, in houses of mourning. The pastoral work is so great a help to preaching. It will suggest many a subject, and give you many a text and many a sermon.

I remember that, many years ago, when I was a young clergyman, and in the habit of preaching two written sermons, I was in the heat of writing when I was summoned unexpectedly to a sick bed. I confess that the old Adam did rise within me for a moment. I wished this person had not been ill at that particular time, or, at all events, that I had not been sent for. But I went, and found afterwards that my time had not been lost. I came back all the better for my visit. Depend upon it, pastoral visitation, in all its varieties, will give abundance of material for pulpit preparation, which will in vain be

sought for from books. And in these days of shaky faith and of scepticism, one of the strongest evidences of the truth of the Gospel is the power of God's grace in the afflicted, the sick, and the dying. I told the working men at the Brighton Congress some time since, and I now repeat it, that the four happiest people I have ever seen in my life—without a single exception—were four bedridden sick women—all bright Christians, not only not murmurers, but joyful sufferers. Depend upon it, when our convictions are shaken by scepticism; when even the deep arguments of Butler and the lucid arguments of Paley fail to satisfy doubts, or to answer difficult suggestions which present themselves, we shall often find, in our pastoral visiting, convincing exhibitions of the reality of God's grace, and abundant testimony to the power and faithfulness of the God of the promises, to the preciousness of Christ, and to the comfort of the Holy Ghost. We shall come back exclaiming, "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

See to it then that you draw all your studies this way. Lay under contribution everything which you read. Read your daily or weekly newspaper with an eye to your sermons. Learn to look at men and things with a non-professional eye—as men of intellect and wit and power of writing see them. Look at them often from a layman's standpoint. Many and many a hint, I can assure you, I have gained for my sermons from reading my newspaper, as well when agreeing with, as when differing from, the writer. "Let us not then make any distinction, but say that there is a general kind of preparation, a profound and continuous study of the congregation, of human life, of our own hearts, and of the Bible; a habit of mental discipline, and of arranging ideas that may pass the mind, which will never leave the preacher at a loss in a familiar address or a simple exposition of Scripture." *

Never take up the fanatical notion that study is unnecessary. The promise of the

* Vinet—quoted in "The Pastor and the Parish," p. 96.

Holy Ghost (Mark xiii. 11), and the precept which accompanied it—"Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate"—was given for special circumstances to a particular class of men. It is not a *general* promise applicable, under all circumstances, to you and to me. Richard Cecil says, we may expect a special blessing "to accompany truth, but not to supersede labour." Speaking of those who seemed to expect just the contrary, he adds, "I have been cured by observing how these men preach, and I have often heard such talk nonsense by the hour." But, with all your study, beware lest your sermons lose freshness and bloom and unction. We want the lamp, but not the smell of it. The cultivation of our talents, be they many or few, is absolutely necessary. There have been a few men who have been good and great preachers without much study or art; and there is a large class of men whom no study will ever make great preachers: but a man who possesses great gifts may improve them by careful study. And many a

man, who would otherwise be perhaps almost useless—almost intolerable—as a preacher, from lack of particular gifts in that direction, may, by diligent and prayerful attention, cultivate the little measure of talent which he has, and ultimately prove a useful minister of Christ.

There is an oft-told story of the present eloquent Prime Minister, that when he first attempted to speak in the House of Commons nobody listened. He said, "The day shall come when you *shall* hear me;" and, as we all know, that day *has* come. Some of us present remember good Bishop Villiers. He used to say that, when he first began extempore preaching, he completely broke down. It was only by continual perseverance in the simple schoolroom expositions, that he attained to be one of the most useful and acceptable preachers in London, and one who, under God's blessing, has left his mark on many souls.

We are still, remember, in the study. We come next to the choice of texts—a very important point; and, when you have been

many years in the ministry, by no means an easy one. Bishop Burnet, in his work on "The Pastoral Care," says—"A sermon should be made for a text, and not a text for a sermon." There was once upon a time at Oxford—a long while ago now—a certain undergraduate, who, if the examiners had allowed to be a candidate for Holy Orders sooner than they did, instead of plucking and plucking and plucking him, till the poor man had scarcely a feather left, would have fallen short of the mark in this respect. He had his first sermon written long before he passed "Greats" at any rate —probably "Smalls"—and a friend asked him "What's your text?" He had not thought about a text. Doubtless the sermon turned out somewhat discursive, however orthodox.

First, then, as a rule, the choice of a text should not be sudden. Choose a text some time before you preach upon it, in order that you may have time to think it well out. As a rule, "write late." I do not advise you to *write* your sermon on the Monday or

Tuesday for the following Sunday. And here I am borne out by Archdeacon Evans, who, in his "Bishopric of Souls," says, "Strike it off at a heat." Go into your pulpit on Sunday morning with the sermon thoroughly fresh in your mind and heart. Again, do not be ambitious in the choice of texts. Choose plain, full texts. There are some texts which almost preach themselves. It is very desirable, and it will be found greatly to facilitate preaching, that a beginner should take grand and leading texts of Scripture, containing great truths of the Gospel, or bearing especially on practical life. It will be safer for you too, generally —and especially for beginners—not to try to preach upon odd texts, but rich, massive texts—as, for example, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," etc. (Titus ii.); or, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found," etc. (Isa. lv.)

Aim at bringing out before your people the *Variety of Scripture.* This variety is a great advantage, both to minister and people. Students of the Old and New

Testament have history, type, prophecy, discourses, parable, epistles, Apocalypse, all as their storehouse. And if "rightly divided," the same truth will come out of each of them, only with different surroundings—the same gem, with different settings. When I was first ordained, I preached upon Original Sin, and Justification by Faith, and other cardinal doctrines; and I fancied, in my conceit and ignorance, I had said all that I could say on the subject. But time has shown me how superficial the thought was. Take Justification by Faith—you may preach it not only from St. Paul's Epistles, but, yet more graphically, from Zechariah's vision of the change of raiment. The great doctrine of the Atonement—a doctrine of fundamental and vital importance—is to be found in the Old Testament as well as in the New. "In the Old Testament," says Augustine, "the New Testament lies hid; in the New Testament, the Old Testament lies open." A life's ministry will exhaust neither the hidden nor the open. Seek this variety in preaching the Word of God.

Cultivate *Expository Preaching*. There is nothing like it. I recollect hearing Dean Close say—and those of you who do not agree with his school of theology must acknowledge that, during a long life, he has been a great light and a great preacher —"I cannot be too thankful that, at one part of the day, I have been in the habit of taking a mass of Scripture, and explaining it to the people." The practice, we shall find, involves honesty to the Word of God. It secures us, too, against having *pet subjects*. It prevents us from dwelling upon particular portions of truth constantly, to the neglect of comparatively minor subjects. Moreover, it will sometimes shield us from the suspicion of personality. If we take a particular text, and preach upon it, and it happens to go home more than usually to one of our hearers, we shall very likely be accused of personality. But when we come across the same text in the natural order of our exposition, no one can reasonably say we are guilty of a direct attack upon him. At any rate, we did not go out of our way for our subject.

Make very sure of the *original and of the context.* How many a man has sat down post-haste to write a sermon, and then turned, (happily) just at the last, to his Greek Testament, and has found "It won't do! The original won't bear it." I have no sympathy with the scruples of some who say that we have no business to unsettle people's minds by a reference to the original. We must avoid pedantry. There is no necessity to be always choosing texts just for the sake of airing our scholarship. But when translation is manifestly erroneous, and we have a body of scholars at our back, it is our solemn duty to translate accurately to our people. Surely we dare not present as God's word a text erroneously translated. If, however, a man is a shallow scholar, let him know his weakness, and be quite sure, before attempting to enlighten others, that the authorities on which he relies are first-rate and trustworthy.

We remember a sermon preached, many years ago, before the Queen, from the text, "Not slothful in business" (Rom. xii. 12).

The preacher's doctrine was true and practical. But τῇ σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνηροί cannot mean "not slothful in business," as intending by "business" our several vocations. It should be rendered "zeal."

A man may preach a very useful sermon from the text, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. v. 22). It is very doubtful whether this is what St. Paul says. So again, "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter" (1 Thess. iv. 6). It is very questionable, indeed, whether this contains the slightest reference to dishonesty. It is a delicate allusion to the painful subject of which he is speaking in the context. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. xiv. 23);—in a sense this is universally true; but if you take it out of the context, and apply it, you are liable to a challenge from any scholar, as it *here* means really, "Whatsoever your own conscience does not tell you to be right, must be sin and wrong *to you*." It is not a *general* proposition. "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts ii. 47); they were not added

in order that they might be saved, but because they were in process of *being saved.* Many a sermon has been preached from that verse in Isaiah, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isa. i. 6); and often has it been quoted as if it refers primarily to the corruption of human nature. Its meaning is, that the Jews were so bruised and beaten by the chastisements of God—of course as the result of their sins—that, as a nation, "the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint" (ver. 5). So again with the passage, "Knowing . . . the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. v. 11); *not,* "Knowing the awful terrors of God's wrath, we were to preach them;" but surely, "Knowing the fear of God, we seek to persuade men—ourselves being impelled by that fear."

These are samples. And therefore make very sure of the Hebrew and the Greek.

But, in these days of abundant helps, it is not well to be premature in rushing to Commentaries in the preparation of your sermons.

Think a passage out for yourself *first;* and afterwards those able scholars whose works may be within your reach—not ancient Fathers or old Expositors only, but our own Alford, Wordsworth, Trench, Ellicott, Lightfoot, to say nothing of *the best* of the Germans—may test your own conclusions.

With regard to *divisions* in Sermons. It is important to have them, as a rule, for the sake of others. They are pegs upon which people's memories hang what you have said. There are few who can draw out a lucid chain of reasoning in such a way as to ensure its being fastened on the minds and memories of those who listen to it, unless they have these divisions to fall back upon. But avoid a hard and fast line. Cultivate variety even in structure and in argument. But, whether you have divisions or no, *be sure to aim at something*, so that, when the sermon is over, no one shall be at a loss to know what it was about. Archbishop Whateley used to say that some preachers "aimed at nothing, and always hit it!" The Archbishop was not without reason for

his complaint. I remember a clergyman, a most admirable pastor, of whom, when he had left the parish, an artisan said to his successor, "Mr. ——, in his sermons, always seemed to be hunting for something, but had never caught it when he came to the end."

With regard to the *exordium* of a sermon. It is advisable not to lose much time over it. It is a great thing to arrest the attention at first, by a short and pithy sentence or two. Throw thought, pith, and strength into the opening remarks. It is a great mistake to begin a discourse weakly or carelessly.

Above all, avoid too abstract a style of preaching, especially to plain and simple folk. "Preach not so much *Christianity* as CHRIST." There is a great deal of difference between the two—between a system of dry, abstract, dogmatic truth, and a real, living, personal Saviour. The Gospel is wrapped up, so to speak, in the person and nature, the offices, the work, the sufferings of Christ. To preach the Gospel is simply to unfold these. It is most important, in reading the Gospels, the Acts, and the

Epistles, to observe that it is to Christ thus *personally regarded*, not to an abstract system, that we are directed. Our faith and love and hope are centred upon Immanuel Himself, made flesh, living, obeying, suffering, rising, ascending, returning in His glory; not so much on the *atonement*, as on *Christ atoning;* not so much on *a righteousness in Christ*, or *from Christ*, as on *the Lord our righteousness.*

It was thus that Paul preached Christ. He kept, not so much *salvation*, as *the Saviour*, before men's minds and hearts. We are to keep before them, not a lifeless, abstract, speculative system; but Christ living, Christ dying, Christ loving us and giving Himself for us—Christ risen, ascended, exalted, pleading, sympathising—*whom having not seen* we love, but whom one day we shall see for ourselves, and our eyes shall behold, and not another.

In like manner, do not preach about *Providence;* preach about GOD. There is no objection to the word "providence" when used *in connection* with God. But when a man says, "I am very thankful to

Providence," "Providence has been very good to me," I always feel disposed to say, "You coward! why don't you say GOD? You know you *mean* God all the time." It gives great point and power to a sermon not to be abstract. Get your people to believe in a living, loving, personal Father, and a living, loving, personal Saviour. Remember what the key-phrase of the New Testament is: "IN HIM." This is the key-phrase of the Gospel dispensation, as looked at experimentally—not so much a system, not only a creed; but *a real, mysterious union with a living Person.* Mark St. Paul in the sixth chapter of the Romans, how he keeps this great truth in the fore-front; and in the third chapter of Colossians (ver. 3), containing that most wonderful of all wonderful texts—I fancy sometimes it sounds as the deepest text in the whole Bible—"Ye are dead, and *your life is hid with Christ in God.*" Surely *that* is not an abstract thing; it is the idea of our life—however mysteriously—being hidden in and with a *personal* Saviour.

Bear with me, if, as the result of long experience,—while I ask you not to forget what I have said about preaching Providence instead of God,—I add one other exhortation on this point. It is this: *Preach often on the providence of God.* I would speak with emphasis on this point, because I have seldom or never preached a sermon bearing directly on God's providence, but I have been privileged to receive grateful testimony as to the usefulness of that sermon. In your study, picture your congregation. See them in your "mind's eye." Who—what—are these to whom you are to preach? Sinners and sufferers. Some oppressed with money cares and troubles. Rachel mourning for her children. Newly made widows. Husbands from whom the desire of their eyes has only just been taken away. Children fatherless or motherless. Many a one who, if talking to you in your study or in their own homes, would say, "Ah! Sir, I have seen much trouble." Yes; you are going to preach that sermon to many a sin-laden, sorrow-stricken, world-

wearied, restless heart. Preach then to each and all of these a covenant God, the Fatherhood of God, the "exceeding great and precious promises." God's sufficiency in trial, the blessedness of trial, the uses of affliction, the responsibilities of a heavenly Father's chastisement, and the true end of discipline. Only do this, and you may be quite sure your sermons will come home to the every-day life of your hearers, and you will have the delightful experience so precious to the minister of Christ—not indeed the empty flattery of silly women, nor vain compliments about 'a fine sermon;" but the experience of something far better and far sweeter—the grasp of the hand, and, it may be, a tear in the eye, with the acknowledgment from a comforted believer or an awakened sinner—"Oh Sir, your sermon seemed as if it were meant for me; it suited my case exactly. I thank you for it with all my heart." This will cheer you on your way—to know that God, by His own Spirit, has carried your discriminating and loving words right home to the con-

science and the heart,—that you have "filled the hungry with good things."

Again, *be on your guard against the narrowness of human systems.* Would that every candidate for Holy Orders and every minister would read "The Remains of Richard Cecil" —a small volume, sound in theology, and teeming with sanctified common sense. As a practical volume it is unrivalled. Mr. Cecil writes thus: "No man will preach the Gospel so *freely* as the Scriptures preach it, unless he will submit to talk like an Antinomian, in the estimation of a great body of Christians; nor will any man preach it so *practically* as the Scriptures, unless he will submit to be called, by as large a body, an Arminian. Many think that they find a middle path: which is, in fact, neither one thing nor another, since it is not the incomprehensible, but grand, plan of the Bible. It is somewhat of human contrivance. It savours of human poverty and littleness." * "The right way of interpreting Scripture is to take it as we find it, without any attempt

* "Cecil's Remains," 10th Edit., p. 289.

to force it into any particular system. Whatever may be fairly inferred from Scripture, we need not fear to insist on. Many passages speak the language of what is called Calvinism, and that in almost the strongest terms. I would not have a man clip and curtail these passages, to bring them down to some system: let him go with them in their free and full sense; for, otherwise, if he do not absolutely pervert them, he will attenuate their energy. But let him look at as many more, which speak the language of Arminianism, and let him go all the way with these also. God has been pleased thus to state and to leave the thing; and all our attempts to distort it, one way or other, are puny and contemptible." *

Preach not only *what is in Scripture*, but preach it as *Scripture puts it.* Truth is presented in varied aspects in the Bible. No ultra-Calvinist would have said, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek. xviii. 31); yet God says it.

In some of our old-fashioned towns, we

* *Ibid*, p. 290.

see the box trees closely cropped—not a twig, not a leaf straggling—all trim and tidy. They are curiosities. But we all greatly prefer to see them as they were naturally, and before the shears did their work so well with the twigs and branches. Why? because it is as God made the tree. Beware, then, of clipping and cramping the fulness and freedom and simplicity of God's truth with your own pet shears.

As regards simplicity, an eminent Dissenting minister once said to me, when speaking of the evangelical clergy, "I am afraid, in their desire to be simple in their preaching, they are becoming shallow: there is no theology in their sermons." Simplicity is not necessarily shallowness. Sermons should be vertebrated; they should have a back-bone of sound, distinctive theology.

Much evil has followed from too great anxiety about *the dignity of the pulpit.* I am not speaking of the dignity of the *office*, but the dignity of the *style.* "The good old Church of England," it was once observed, "is dying of dignity." Thank God! that is

not true now. But the great majority of the clergy seem to be afraid of a homely word, or familiar every-day expression in the pulpit, and thus very many of our sermons fly over the heads of our people altogether. We are not to be coarse or vulgar. Avoid "sesquipedalia verba." There is a great deal of nonsense written and talked about Saxon words. Never mind whether it is a Saxon word or not; is it a word which the people will understand? That's the point. Never mind whence it comes. Many Saxon words, however, are far better understood in the majority of congregations than words from Latin or Greek sources. It is better to talk of "happiness" than "felicity;" to speak of "home" rather than the "domestic circle;" and of "heaven" rather than the "celestial regions."

If you have a talent for it, it is most important to cultivate the power of *Illustration*—"windows which let in the light." But they are not arguments. We are not to feed our congregations upon them. We do not live upon flowers, but they are very

pleasant in their way. This is one of the secrets of Mr. Spurgeon's power. He has a wonderful gift of illustration. Referring to that controverted point of the believer falling away—the indefectibility of grace—he once made this observation, from his own standpoint of truth (about which I am not arguing now), "The believer, like a man on shipboard, may fall again and again on the deck, but he will never fall overboard." You may agree or not with the statement, but you will admit that the illustration is striking. Again, "We mustn't preach cream, and live skimmed milk." Very homely, but very striking. The admirable Dr. Guthrie—as a rule too flowery and too much given to illustration—said once, "A selfish man—whose heart is no bigger than his coffin; just room enough for himself." These are nails in a sure place.

Preach doctrine practically, and practice doctrinally. Interweave the two. Good Dr. Marsh once said to me, "It is a difficult thing to preach a *whole* epistle;" by which he meant to preach both the doctrinal part

and the practical. Take the second chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to Titus—a great model for us. See how he grounds upon the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, and upon the redeeming work of Christ, the duty of servants to be honest, and not even to give a saucy answer. Aim at every-day life. Aim at the counting-house, the shop, and weights and measures, and the adulteration of goods, and trade lies. Aim at the drawing-room, the nursery, and the kitchen. Aim at crabbed tempers, harsh judgments. Spare neither tattlers nor busy-bodies.

Do not be afraid of your pew-rents. The Rev. William Howels, of Long Acre, a great preacher in his day, was anxious to ascertain, by pastoral visitation, whether his sermons had been understood. One day he called on a woman who kept a small huckster's shop, and who had heard him preach on the previous Sunday. In answer to his testing inquiries, she said, "Well, Sir, 'I comed home and burnt my bushel!" She had used a dishonest measure, but he had touched her conscience, and this was the

practical result. Give me a sermon which makes sinners burn their bushels.

Aim at the conscience—the heart—and not the head only. Do not forget that your people have got hearts as well as heads. It is therefore a great mistake to be afraid of exciting the feelings. This should not be done unduly. It is easy to make women cry —and some men too. But God appeals to our feelings. We too must appeal to them. "No preacher is a preacher who cannot satisfy the understanding; but he is a bad preacher who leaves off there."

I pass on now to the vexed question—and I shall not attempt to settle it—of *Written or Extempore Sermons*. Certainly you must cultivate the art of extempore speaking. It is really essential in the present day. On many important occasions a man is positively nowhere as a clergyman who cannot get up and speak, with self-possession, good sense, and fluently. At public meetings there is a sad contrast between the young clergyman and the young barrister. You go up to a young minister and say, "Would

you say a few words?" And the answer is, "I am no speaker." But go to a young barrister with a brief in your hand—his start in life, perhaps. Does he say, "I am no speaker—I am too nervous—I shall break down—you must excuse me"? Not a bit of it. I say therefore to one and all—Cultivate the art. Of course there are dangers connected with it. But, as Archdeacon Evans says, "It is more dangerous than difficult." Too many men mistake fluency for fertility, and froth for substance. It is extremely desirable to preach extempore, if you can. There is a mysterious sympathy between hearers and speaker, which goes very far to rivet the attention more closely to extempore preaching. You will look your people more fully in the face. This is a great matter. The power of the eye is great. Only you must be careful not to make your hearers nervous lest you should break down. Master your subject; get your mind full of it; make up your mind what you are going to say.

With regard to the plan of delivering a

sermon *memoriter*. This is, of all plans, the least desirable. You will be hampered by trying to fall back accurately on your prepared notes or manuscript. And even if you succeed, your sermon must lose almost always much of its spontaneity and naturalness; to say nothing of the wear to the mind, which is very great. Many and many a man, simply from pacing up and down his study, committing his sermon to memory, and then delivering it *verbatim* on the Sunday, has damaged his health, and his brain too. You may take my word for what it is worth—I do not stand here as an oracle—but I believe it to be, except in some rare cases, the most trying plan of all.

It is very important, if our sermons are written, not to be slaves to the book. We must know thoroughly well what we are going to say, remembering what Bishop Burnet's rule is, that a discourse, to be *heard* with any life, must be *spoken* with some.

Above all things, when you are in the pulpit, strive to realize God's presence;

realize whose work it is in which you are engaged; realize the interests which are at stake—that you have the truth of God as your trust; and then—words cannot tell you how earnestly I would say it—cast yourself entirely, and all your preparation, on the present help of the Spirit of God. This gives unction—that indescribable thing which makes a sermon from an inferior man often far more effective than a grand sermon from a great preacher. Mr. Simeon said, "Don't preach as if you were preaching *before* people; don't preach as if you were preaching *at* people; but preach as if you were preaching *to* people." I take it, this is a great defect in the preaching of the Church of England in the present day; there is not enough of the "*Thou*" and the "*You*." We lack directness. Too many preach as if they were preaching *before* the people; instead of which they ought to feel, "Now I am determined you shall not sit there and criticise me; I will take good care not to leave you in the position of supposing that I am reading an essay, and you are

to judge it. I am preaching a sermon—a message from God—and that sermon is to judge you."

Preach then with a direct aim. Be very earnest in your pulpit exhortations. "Remember that in all this you have a *real* work to do. Let this thought be always with you. Go out to visit in your parish, not because you ought to spend so much time in visiting your people, but because *they* have souls; and you have committed to you (feeble as you are) the task of saving them, in Christ's strength, from everlasting burnings. When you talk with them, beware of the dreamy listlessness which would decently fill up some ten minutes with kindness, good words, an inquiry as to their families, their work, their health, ending possibly with a formal prayer; but say to yourself, *Now must I get into this heart some truth from God.* . Be *real* with them; strike as one that would make a dint upon their shield of hardness, yea, and smite through it to their heart of hearts. When you preach, be *real.* Set your people before you in their numbers, their wants,

their dangers, their capacities: choose a subject, not to show yourself off, but to benefit them; and then speak straight to them, as you would beg your life, or counsel your son, or call your dearest friend from a burning house, in plain, strong, earnest words."*

Be very earnest in your pulpit exhortations. But do not scold, nor rant. "It is the thunder that frights, but the lightning that smites." In a work, not sufficiently known, by the Abbé Mullois, great stress is laid upon a "spirit of love in the pulpit." The Abbé remarks, "After the many rules for eloquence which have been laid down of late years, strange to say, the first and most essential of all has been overlooked, viz., charity; to address men *well*, they must be loved *much*."

Remember that we are not to elevate ourselves, as if we were superior beings. One secret of an effective ministry is to put yourself, and to let the people see that you put yourself, on the same platform with

* Bishop of Oxford's Ordination Charge, 1846, pp. 16, 17.

them. "I am a sinner; I am a sorrower; I have felt the burden under which you are suffering." When you speak of the loss of a child, or parent, or wife, as the case may be, without *talking* of yourself, let them see that you have gone through the same trials (if indeed it has been so), and that therefore you can feel for, and feel *with*, them.

As to "*Action*" in the pulpit. I suppose we are all agreed that to Englishmen excess of action is distasteful. Rules are undesirable. Be natural. I am no advocate for the "start theatric, practised at a glass." But if you have a tendency to action, if your temperament is such that you find it difficult to throw it off, do not discourage it. If hands and arms will work, let them. Check excess. But do not pin them down, as long as their action is *natural*. Let them go. Speaking of the hand as an organ of expression, Sir Charles Bell says, "Were we to seek for authorities, we should take in evidence the works of the great painters. By representing the hands disposed in conformity with the attitude of the figures, the

old masters have been able to express every different kind of sentiment in their compositions. Who, for example, has not been sensible to the expression of reverence in the hands of the Magdalens by Guido, to the eloquence of those in the cartoons of Raphael, or the significant force in those of the Last Supper by Da Vinci? In these great works may be seen all that Quintilian says the hand is capable of expressing; 'For other parts of the body assist the speaker, but these, I may say, speak themselves. By them we ask, we promise, we invoke, we dismiss, we threaten, we entreat, we deprecate, we express fear, joy, grief, our doubts, our assent, our penitence; we show moderation and profusion; we mark number and time.'" * It has its power in the pulpit, to an extent of which very few are aware. Therefore, much as we may perhaps question the desirability of constantly having recourse to this method of securing attention or impressing the mind, it is

* Bridgwater Treatise.—The Hand. By Sir Charles Bell. Sixth Edition, 1860, p. 166.

certain that, judiciously employed, it has that effect. The want of natural and moderate action is a great and general defect in English preaching.

I must make a few observations, and they shall be very few, upon the practice of preaching other people's sermons. I know that some of our bishops—and good bishops too—have recommended it; and I grant you that, now and then, a vicar or a rector does put his curate under the necessity of over-preaching. A beginner has two or three sermons to prepare in a week. The unfortunate man finds his duties somewhat difficult of fulfilment, and he is driven to borrow. There may be exceptional cases of pressure. But, as a rule, my advice is, preach your own only. If you preach other men's, tell your people that they are not your own. Tell them that you have been hard-worked throughout the week, or so unwell that you have selected a sermon for them. But not seldom men who borrow borrow the sermons of the greatest preachers, and thus give something immeasurably above what they

could have produced. And ask yourself whether, when you take your manuscript or notes into the pulpit, you do not seem to say before God and man, "That is my own." To preach other men's sermons without acknowledgment seems to be at least an equivocal proceeding. But I make no reflection on others. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

There are also secondary considerations in connection with the habit, which will not be trifling ones. Generally, as I have said, those who preach other people's sermons preach those that are far superior to their own; and the consequence is, that, now and then, they are placed in a very awkward position. I remember the case of a clergyman who preached for me many years ago, and was extremely dexterous in doing it. He took the precaution to adopt a different text. He preached, not *verbatim et literatim*, but substantially, another man's sermon from "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24)—a sermon in which the character of the

true Christian was depicted. But he took a very different text. He went to Daniel, "Thou are weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Dan. v. 27). And when Hugh White made out such and such a man was not a Christian by St. Paul's tests, my friend put the false professor into the "balance," and found him "wanting." But now the awkward part of the story has to be told. The sermon made such an impression upon the congregation, that he was straightway asked to print it! Such is the awkward position in which you may find yourself.

I have heard of another case. A minister had preached in the morning a very good sermon, and promised to finish his subject in the evening. Lucklessly, the wife of the friend for whom he was preaching recognised the sermon, and went to her husband's bookcase between the services, and laid the preacher's evening sermon in the study which he was to occupy. She had a wife's jealousy for her husband's reputation, as the "strange preacher" had outshone him.

But, to speak more seriously, preach it as you will, and though the sermon may be a better one than your own, there will be a want of freshness about it. It will not have been thought out, nor prayed over, in the same way as your own, and you cannot look for the same blessing as upon the product of your own thought and labour and prayer.

I must draw to a close. In all your preaching remember the words of George Herbert—"The greatest and hardest preparation is within." "The character of his sermon is holiness. It is gained, first, by choosing texts of devotion, not controversy, —moving and ravishing texts, whereof the Scriptures are full. Secondly, by dipping and seasoning all our words and sentences in our hearts before they come into our mouths, truly and cordially expressing all we say, so that the auditors may plainly testify that every word is heart deep." Nor let it be forgotten that it is one thing to preach an occasional sermon as a stranger, but it is quite another thing to be preaching as a pastor going in and out among his

people. Cecil says, "We look at a man out of the pulpit to see what he is worth in it;" and Cowper tells us that he venerates the man

> "whose doctrine and whose life
> Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
> That he is honest in the sacred cause."
> (*Task: Timepiece.*)

"You are always," says Archdeacon Evans, "in public." The main secret of the power of the minister is that his whole life is a continual sermon. On the other hand, not all the powers of a Boanerges will compensate for the evil influence of an inconsistent life. We may apply the illustration which I have already quoted, "We must not *preach* cream, and live skimmed milk." The standard of the life sermon must not flagrantly differ from the standard of the pulpit sermon. The ἠθικὴ πίστις is mighty in its presence and mighty in its absence,—"σχεδὸν, ὡς εἰπεῖν, κυριωτάτην ἔχει πίστιν τὸ ἦθος." * It was once said of an able preacher, "When he is in the pulpit, it is a pity he should

* Aristot. Rhetoric, i. 2.

ever come out of it; and when he is out of it, it is a pity he ever gets into it." Well indeed it is for Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or Boanerges, if his daily life "allures to brighter worlds, and leads the way,"—if "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ," be not mockery on his tongue. The possibility of preaching to others, and being oneself "a castaway,"—what more urgent incentive to prayer, watchfulness, to circumspection, to consistency, to holy living? A devil might shudder to see a great preacher drop from his pulpit into hell.

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